

Steel Pipe and Supply Company

SPS uses SAP Extended ECM and Enterprise Scan to accurately track more than 1.5 million MTRs and coordinate over 600 deliveries daily



About Steel Pipe and Supply Companies, Inc.

For more than 80 years, Steel Pipe and Supply's (SPS) family of companies has built its carbon steel product, distribution and logistics businesses based on the latest coil- and value-added steel processing technology. Considered one of the largest privately held steel service centers, SPS has locations throughout the Midwest and Southern regions in the U.S. and in Mexico. The corporation's business lines include coil processing; toll processing; value-add processing services; galvanizing; tube and specialty pipe; metallurgical testing; storage and handling; and steel distribution and logistics. In steel's commodity market, SPS's differential is a customer-centric mission, building out a digital service suite that includes a powerful 24/7 Self-Service Portal.

Two Documents Can Make All the Difference

In steel manufacturing and distribution, the roles of content and documentation never shut down. More information and required documentation are added through each step, from the supply chain to the mill furnace, from production lines to loading docks, to final destinations and into finished products. What's more, data about each step, and faster, easier access to that data and support documentation, is increasingly in demand by customers, anytime day or night.

Mill Test Reports (MTR) and Proof of Deliveries (POD) are two document types critical to the quality, risk management, and traceability processes. They can make, break, or extend loyal customer-supplier relationships. Used to provide customers with a consistent record of all metal testing and product characteristics, an MTR can include a product description; dimensions; alloy and chemical analysis/descriptions; mechanical properties, such as strength, hardness, and elasticity; and a heat number or heat

code that matches the batch numbers stamped on the steel product before it leaves the mill.

For SPS, MTRs represent details from their material suppliers as well as from their own product testing. As MTR content expands, it becomes a document library attached to each sale, production batch and shipment. Once shipped and in the logistics cycle, PODs list tracking and delivery data, including identifications of who signed for a delivery; arrival date, time and location; shipment location, time and date; contents description, weight and noteworthy materials; and other relevant product or delivery information. Taken together MTR and POD documentation is complex, data-intensive and essential to the entire SPS product lifecycle.

In 2016, the SPS IT team began to weigh the benefits of upgrading its homegrown content management system versus replacing it with a more modern, flexible, and adaptable one. The company believed it was the perfect opportunity to digitally transform its content operations and enable greater document consistency throughout the organization. As a result, the lead IT project team launched a new initiative to replace SPS' legacy system with a more powerful, integrated approach for MTRs and PODs as the first phase of a larger, more comprehensive enterprise-wide initiative.

Challenges

While steel may appear to be old-line industry, smart manufacturing, robotics, analytics and business and enterprise resource management are digitally transforming the business, driving innovation and new opportunities. Yet, as the team officially chose a new technology path for content management, the shift from legacy to a new landscape presented several challenges:

Transaction Volumes

- SPS' own fleet and distribution partners support on average 600 deliveries per day which directly affects POD production and use
- SPS manages an average 1,100 batches per day, each with its own MTR
- At project launch, SPS tracked 1.6 million MTRs stored in the legacy environment

Distributed, Disconnected and Diffuse Systems and Processes:

- SPS' employees accessed MTRs and PODs from eight different physical sites
- MTRs and PODs were found in 12 different storage locations
- MTRs and PODS were plagued by missing information and errors
- MTR and POD data and documentation formats did not conform to any internal or external standards
- MTR and POD data lived on the wholly separate, antiquated legacy system
- The lack of business process and system integration, and the various time- and labor-intensive processes in use to create, amend, track, manage, and deliver documents, triggered delays and frustration--both internally and to waiting customers

Redesign and Rearchitect Before Technology Transfer

Starting with an initial discovery process, the Content Management experts at Optima listened, taking time to understand SPS current state, initial project goals and the longer-term view. In addition to the disciplined focus on mission-critical MTRs and PODs, the partners agreed to a practical first phase centered on SPS's two largest business, Steel Distribution Centers and Tube and Specialty Production.

The SPS team considered several potential solutions, and worked with Optima to compare them with architecture, technology, integration, and business processes goals. Ultimately, SPS decided EMSPS decided to implement SAP Extended ECM by OpenText ("xECM") due to its holistic, comprehensive approach and an integrated toolkit that could support true enterprise-

wide content management and control. It also enables integrating xECM with existing SPS business processes and functions, in essence creating a content-rich new paradigm across an SAP base.

Working together, SPS and Optima took a step back and approached the project from a "what is possible" rather than a "replace what we have" perspective. Guided by Optima's proven Accelerate™ methodology, the project team delved deep and wide on several fronts to define, clarify, and document in detail:

- All connections, inputs and outputs for the new xECM design and development
- All common and edge xECM access scenarios throughout the system
- The layers of data access and control needed—and wanted
- All current and potential new, efficient processes
- All workflows—those in existence and heavy use, as well as logical, new and necessary, exceptions and workarounds, and several ideal and innovative.

The team examined these elements keeping in mind the "as is" and "to be" opportunities presented by internal clients (leadership and all employees); supply and distribution chain (i.e. steel makers and delivery drivers); and the customer base. The concentration on design in this Envision phase allowed SPS IT to re-architect processes, create efficient workflows, eliminate bottleneck and process loops.

Build, Deploy and Delight

With the time and energy invested in architecture efficiencies and process redesign, SPS and Optima turned to server and software installation. The team optimized Connected Workspaces, a key component of the xECM solution, to use out-of-the-box templates and functionality for the new MTR data storage and organization. Information contained in MTRs—material information and transactional data—are treated and integrated as SAP objects. MTRs, in turn, are stored and shared via Workspaces, which SPS generated for sales orders, outbound deliveries, outbound shipments, and production batches, among other functions and processes.

The new MTRs also used OpenText's Extended ECM tool to integrate outputs from SAP systems to improve employee's ability to monitor and control batch data, fill in missing data, and reduce errors. Importantly, given the tight OpenText-SAP integration, this functionality is delivered seamlessly and directly from their primary SAP application.

Through the OpenText implementation and a single system location, POD content and access became more effective and efficient. The team simplified POD content input and output. Moreover, SPS made a value-add leap by efficiently linking PODs into SAP Deliveries via barcodes. POD barcodes, scanned in pick-up and delivery activities by SPS and by carriers, provide the unique identifier that is automatically delivered and stored in one, or several, relevant Connected Workspaces. The PODs and barcode combo, and Workspace organization, give SPS a persistent, easily accessible, and accurate POD copy for the first time.

For information delivery and content access for customers, SPS and Optima took up OpenText's Document Presentment toolkit to create an eCommerce solution. Customers can use their SPS Self-Service digital portal (based on SAP Hybris) and Extended ECM link at any time, via mobile or desktop device, or choose to receive printed or emailed copies of data-rich shipping packets. The packets serve as a supply chain single source of truth, consolidating pack list data, delivery notes, and relevant supplier MTRs, imprinted with a customer watermark in PDF.

Technologies Used

- SAP Extended ECM by OpenText
- OpenText Enterprise Scan
- SAP Document Presentment by OpenText

Ongoing Activities and Next Steps

Given its scale, scope, impact, and enterprise integration with core SAP applications, SPS' accelerated 10-month phase 1 project was successful. The new functionality is rolling out to the company sites in Mexico and in additional MTR work with primary suppliers. Today, SPS continues its collaborative relationship with Optima to further improve their system and is also an Optima TotalCare™ client.

About Optima ECM Consulting

Optima is a global company centered on Enterprise Content Management strategies and business solutions for Compliance, Optimization, Revenue Enhancement and Collaboration. We can help you with:

- **Strategy & Planning**
Define and prioritize a strategic end-to-end ECM vision to link disparate data and content sources, supercharging the value of your content. Extract invaluable business insights to initiate a comprehensive digital transformation and accelerate your future success.
- **Redesigning a Better Business Solution**
Improve the way you do business by aligning and optimizing your unique content with legacy business processes, technology, and people. Increase efficiency, productivity and transparency at every point in your most mission-critical value chains.
- **Unleashing the Power of Technology**
We help you solve the technology question. Leverage our deep experience in selection, implementation and roll-out of best-in-class software from SAP & OpenText to deliver streamlined and integrated solutions. Boost the productivity of your entire organization today and accelerate your progress to tomorrow's goals.
- **Optimizing & Sustaining Your Systems**
Reduce risk, safeguard your systems and create an adaptable enterprise to accelerate your company's performance. Monitor and act upon real-time system and data insights for continual enterprise improvement. We also provide tailor-made support to ensure system uptime and on-demand operations team capacity with the expert skills you require.

We ensure our clients increase productivity, improve customer service and reduce operational costs while increasing compliance levels with superior solutions using SAP, the OpenText Content Suite and SAP ECM Solutions by OpenText.

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