**IBM**

**DB2**® Information Management Software

# Interstate Electrical Supply spotlights customer service with DB2.

## Overview

- **Application**
  Information management foundation for mission-critical business applications
- **Business Benefits**
  Significant increase in annual sales; substantial increase in profit margins; improved productivity; stronger customer relationships
- **Software**
  IBM DB2® Universal Database™ Enterprise Edition, Version 7.1
- **Hardware**
  IBM @server® pSeries™ 660
- **Business Partner**
  TradePower



*IES has significantly increased its competitive advantage with improved business intelligence reporting from its DB2 and TradeSource-based solution.*

The fires of innovation burn deep at Interstate Electrical Supply (IES). The Columbus, Georgia, company was founded on the idea that highly specialized products and services are the keys to success in the electrical wholesaling industry. Today, IES is a multi-million dollar business that continues to set itself apart from the competition with new and unique offerings—including factory-floor automation solutions and onsite training for customers.

*"Our legacy applications had become outdated and were preventing us from delivering the level of service we wanted to provide to our customers."*

*—Steve Phillips, Vice President, Interstate Electrical Supply*

IES backs its inventory of more than 12,000 items with personalized service from its skilled support staff. To maintain its leading market position, the 65-person company continually seeks ways to deliver superior customer service. Specifically, IES recently focused on improving its interactions with the industrial market sector and commercial contractors, which make up its largest revenue-generating segments. Its existing IT system, however, was holding it back.

IES had been using an antiquated commercial business package that did not contain an integrated relational database and was subject to frequent crashes. In addition, the data lacked relevancy and held little value for analyzing business trends and customer buying habits.

*Using the company's information management system from IBM and TradePower, IES employees can monitor realtime warehouse inventory levels.*

"Our legacy applications had become outdated and were preventing us from delivering the level of service we wanted to provide to our customers," says Steve Phillips, vice president, Interstate Electrical Supply. "Because the information was scattered between separate applications, it was taking days to respond to a customer query that we should have been able to address immediately."

To solve its problems, IES turned to IBM Business Partner TradePower for help. Based in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, TradePower specializes in providing software solutions for electrical wholesalers. The company recommended its TradeSource solution, a business application for mid-market companies that is based on IBM DB2 Universal Database running on an IBM @server pSeries.

*"Our DB2 solution has transformed our business. We can now be much more responsive to our customers while lowering our operating costs."*

*—Steve Phillips*

Working with TradePower, IES deployed TradeSource and seamlessly migrated the data residing in its legacy databases to DB2. According to Phillips, the new system greatly enhances the company's opportunities to substantially increase sales as well as profit margin. In addition, the company is leveraging the data mining features of DB2 to develop processes designed for the specific needs of its customers.

"Our DB2 solution has transformed our business," says Phillips. "We can now be much more responsive to our customers—whether they have a question about the status of a bill or the availability of a part. And we can do so while lowering our operating costs."



*With access to up-to-date invoice and shipping information, IES representatives can provide superior customer service.*

### DB2 solution sparks business transformation

IES's TradeSource solution integrates all of the company's business functions—from accounting to warehouse management—into a single application with real-time data access. It presents office staff with a central, unified view of customer relationship and inventory data, ensuring that IES employees can get immediate access to the information they need to respond to customers quickly.

Now when a customer phones, staff members pull up a screen that has all of the customer's vital information, including order history and billing status. They also have access to inventory levels at the company's three warehouses, along with pricing and availability information. "We can address almost any customer issue quickly and easily over the phone," says Phillips.

DB2 manages all of IES's business and product data. "DB2 provides us with high reliability and performance, and powerful reporting capabilities," says Phillips. "It allows us to quickly learn exactly how many products a customer has purchased, whether they bought residential or commercial parts, and when the items were shipped. Understanding buying patterns increases our agility and allows us to take a proactive approach to changing business conditions. That gives us a big competitive advantage and has a positive impact on our financial status."

According to Phillips, choosing DB2 was a big step for IES. "As a small business, we wondered whether DB2 was the best fit for our organization because we thought of it as an enterprise-level information management system," he says. "But after meeting with TradePower, it became clear that no other database could offer the functionality we needed to run our business at peak efficiency. TradePower consultants guided us through the migration, and provided training services to assure that our employees were up to speed when the system went live. Their expertise on this project was invaluable."

The TradeSource solution sits on an IBM @server pSeries 660 running the IBM AIX® operating system. "Our pSeries helps us achieve the level of reliability and stability necessary for running our most important business applications," says Phillips. "And because we're using the robust AIX operating system, we no longer have to worry about the ramifications of running our entire business on an unstable platform."

**Decision to migrate to IBM pays off**
By streamlining key business processes, IES office staff work more productively, which helps strengthen its customer relationships and bolster its bottom line. And the high reliability of the solution has freed up IES's IT personnel to focus on more important tasks, such as creating solutions that further enhance the company's customer service.

Moving forward, IES plans to create a customer extranet using IBM WebSphere® Application Server, which will allow electrical contractors to order parts over the Web. It also plans to automate its warehouse operations by empowering warehouse workers to update inventory levels in real time through personal digital assistants.

"With our TradePower business application backed by DB2 and the pSeries, we feel like we have greatly enhanced our ability to provide the most leading-edge products and services within the electrical wholesale industry," says Phillips. "Without question, our position in the marketplace is much stronger today."

**For more information**
Please contact your IBM marketing representative, IBM Business Partner or IBM Direct at: 1 800 IBM-CALL.

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For more information about Interstate Electrical Supply, visit:
*www.interstate-electrical.com*

For more information about TradePower, visit:
*www.tradepower.com*