

# BPM Solution Finds Multiple Uses

Blue Rhino, a division of Ferrellgas and one of the leading providers of branded propane cylinder exchange and complementary propane-fuel products to consumers, faced a two-part challenge. "We wanted to close our books faster each month," said Tamria Zertuche, senior director of information systems. At the same time, the countdown to compliance with Sarbanes-Oxley regulations had begun. "We needed to start our Sarbanes-Oxley efforts immediately to meet the deadline," Zertuche added.

The solution to both was the implementation of the Metastorm BPM platform, designed specifically for processes critical to business success, but difficult for organizations to automate. The Metastorm BPM™ software suite provides a highly scalable enterprise platform on which solutions can be quickly and easily deployed and customized to meet the unique and dynamic process needs of any organization. It supports both human-based and system-based processes across the full business process management life-cycle, including the design, automation, and management of multiple processes across an organization. Since Blue Rhino first deployed Metastorm BPM, it has become the essential technology to knit together complex processes.

## Inventory, Logistics and Compliance

Since it was founded in 1994, Blue Rhino has built a national retail network with cylinder exchanges offered at more than 36,000 retail locations in 48 states and Puerto Rico, serviced by 57 independent and affiliated distributors. Every month, thousands of transactions representing the movement of literally millions of cylinders takes place.

The pick up and delivery of propane cylinders is the backbone of Blue Rhino's operation. "The whole success of our company depends on the guys delivering our cylinders," Zertuche said.

So when a task force began to explore ways in which the company could close its

**Blue Rhino uses Metastorm BPM™ for inventory tracking, compliance and more**

books faster each month, tracking the movement of its physical assets, specifically its inventory, emerged as an area of opportunity. "There was an evolution in our thinking," Zertuche said. "If we could know everyday where the inventory actually was, we would not have to do that at the end of the month. That led us to looking for a solution that would give us visibility at any point in the process of moving cylinders from one location to another."

At the same time, company officials began to review the demands of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. "We knew that any type of unstructured data used in decision-making processes needed to be documented," Zertuche said. "And there needed to be approvals associated with that."

## The Solution

Blue Rhino decided to find a solution that could meet both those needs. Working with the end-users, Blue Rhino's IT team eventually conducted a "bake off" in which Metastorm emerged victorious. In addition to the speed at which Metastorm was able to get up and running, Zertuche was impressed by Metastorm's help desk support and its dedication to helping users take full advantage of its product functionality.

After the product selection was completed, Zertuche conducted a pilot program in which distributors used the established paper-based process alongside the Metastorm BPM process. At the end of the month, the distributors compared the processes. "What had been a three-day process had been simplified to merely running a report, which took five minutes," Zertuche said.

Metastorm BPM had a similarly dramatic impact on Blue Rhino's compliance efforts. "Metastorm provides sample process maps that can be used out of the box without pro-

gramming," Zertuche said. One is for ad hoc requests. Blue Rhino renamed the functionality "Business Task Request", and it is now the standard process through which one department requests work to be done by another department.

"It has become our most used process," Zertuche said. Since the Business Task Request is self-documenting, it meets Sarbanes-Oxley Section 404 documentation requirements.

## Additional Processes

Blue Rhino has used Metastorm to automate nearly a dozen processes including new employee hiring and customer care. Next up is use with universal product catalogues. "We try to use Metastorm BPM in any project in which a process workflow or approval structure is necessary," Zertuche said. "It is the glue that holds together disparate systems."

Interest in Metastorm BPM is so great that users within Blue Rhino now recognize when something has the potential to be improved with the software and will request it. The payoffs have been obvious. "We have realized efficiencies. We have been able to grow the company 25 percent annually without increasing the headcount in many areas," Zertuche noted. "And," she added, "Metastorm has made my life easier."

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