

# Modernizing Manufacturing Operations & Visibility Across the Supply Chain



Thompson Tractor Company (Thompson) was founded in 1957 by Hall W. Thompson and employs more than 1,500 people throughout the southeast. This family-owned company is a full-line Caterpillar and Hyundai equipment dealer headquartered in Birmingham, Alabama. They specialize in the sale and rental of service and parts for earthmoving, construction, paving, forestry, electric power generation, on-highway truck, marine propulsion and material handling purposes. Thompson is recognized as a reliable provider of industrial equipment and related services nationwide.

Legacy systems and siloed teams made it difficult for Thompson to perform successful speed to market. Manufacturers like Thompson must utilize agile innovation methods and adopt new business models to remain successful in today's competitive landscape and improve operational efficiency. Thompson quickly realized the short- and long-term value of cloud migration. The objective was to develop a business intelligence strategy, and implement data analytics and inventory reporting to streamline their business processes in the cloud so the workforce could do more with less, relating to time, cost and complexity.

## Automating Inventory Management for Converting Equipment from Sales to Rental

As Thompson continued to evolve, they realized they had a significant opportunity to discover the advantages of artificial intelligence for the purposes of their inventory management. Previously, they relied on outdated technologies and manual workflow processes in Microsoft InfoPath 2010 on the SharePoint Server, which would prompt their customers to complete a customized form. In turn, Thompson's workflow relied on their Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software, requiring them to be on-premises to manage back-end operations such as planning and scheduling, supply chain management and inventory control.

Thompson needed guidance with migrating their SharePoint 2010 collaboration software. In summer 2021, Cherry Bekaert's Digital Advisory Practice met with James Busby, Director of Information Technology, and Alvin Currington, Server & Enterprise Storage Engineer, to understand their business needs, concerns and to evaluate their existing business model. Shortly thereafter, it led the way to assessing their existing business model and performing a Microsoft Architecture Design Session (ADS) project to develop their scope of work and software migration requirements to achieve the scope of activities.

Performing an initial ADS provided Thompson and Cherry Bekaert with the following requirements and understanding:

- ▶ Migration of approximately 70% of the existing SharePoint 2010 site.
  - The remaining 30% was outdated, junk data that was more than eight years old.
- ▶ Creation of new SharePoint Architecture to meet modern standards and reorganization of content.
- ▶ Converting eight InfoPath forms and SharePoint 2010 workflows to Power Apps and Power Automate workflows.
- ▶ Providing Power Apps and end-user trainings.

Next, Cherry Bekaert designed a technical architecture by developing a custom application solution using Power Apps for Thompson to help manage, schedule and dispatch industrial equipment in a cloud-based infrastructure. This simplified cloud migration allowed for the availability and scalability of cloud-native applications without redesigning their current applications. Requests that previously took up to a week for processing now only take less than 30 minutes while being out in the field. rather than being connected to the VPN in a physical office location. With the power of integrating Power Apps, Thompson can automate processes, uphold data integrity and achieve real-time visibility. Power Apps has become an essential component for modern business success.

**By leveraging cloud-based technologies, Thompson can access real-time data and insights, enabling them to make faster and more informed decisions.**

Moreover, migrating to the cloud enables them to improve their overall supply chain performance. For this reason, their cloud-based infrastructure permits them to collaborate and share information across their supply chain network, which in turn improves transparency and reduces lead times. Cloud migration is a major enabler for transforming operations, improving customer service and gaining a competitive advantage in today's rapidly changing business environment.

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## Measurable Impact for Manufacturing

While manufacturers continue to battle inflation, increased interest rates, workforce shortages and supply chain challenges, it is increasingly evident that leaders must also review their operational plans to ensure they are strategically investing in their people and technology to help them do more with less.

The volatility of global and economic conditions has radically changed the state of manufacturing. The primary goal achieved by supply chain inventory management was to ensure that the right equipment is available in the right quantities at the right time, while minimizing manual workflow processes. Thompson can now streamline and consolidate their supply chain management thanks to automation and a cloud-based platform. They've been able to explore a variety of strategies that they can implement to proactively rein in costs while simultaneously reinvesting in growth.

## We Can Guide You Forward



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