



# How Epicor for Manufacturing cut Steel Blue's shipping time by an average 50%



“We manage our 3PL relationship through Epicor and it helps us to cut costs with shipping. It has saved us a lot of time and improved efficiency.”



**Daniella Halikis,**  
IT Operations Manager, Steel Blue Boots



Steel Blue is Australia's largest manufacturer of safety footwear.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### CHALLENGES

- Unable to keep up with increasing shipping and receiving functions across multiple warehouses
- Needed scalable business software to provide flexibility as the company grew
- No access to real-time data and statistics across multiple warehouses

### SOLUTION

- Workflows integration for outsourced warehouse management
- Automation of ordering process fulfillment
- Tools to allow greater control and automation of the production process
- Tools to allow greater control of the distribution process and managing 3PL relationship
- Running dashboards and reports to manage materials and BOMs

### RESULTS

- Shipping times cut by 50% on average
- Order preparation reduced by 10-15%
- Distribution best practices achieved
- Increased visibility across the entire supply chain
- Reduced shipping costs
- Improved 3PL and supplier management

# Goals

## ACHIEVING FULL SUPPLY CHAIN VISIBILITY AND REMOVING INEFFICIENT PROCESSES

Steel Blue's goal is to manufacture and market the most comfortable safety footwear and safety boots in the world.

The business seeks to expand into a world-class company that prioritises research and development of new cutting-edge products, technology, and customer service.



“Epicor is the whole foundation of the operations part of our business from finance, customer service, supply chain functions, and manufacturing to support the business globally.” Jeff Knowler, Chief Operations Officer.



The company has experienced strong growth since operations began in 1995 with the launch of the first Steel Blue products.

To accommodate the more price conscious markets, in 1997 they introduced Howler, a mid-priced brand sold globally, and in 2000 a budget brand called Krushers available throughout Asia.

By 2001, Steel Blue's business growth success meant they had outgrown their original manufacturing space.

The company moved to larger premises in Malaga, Western Australia, to meet the growing demand for their products as they expanded their national and export markets and increased their local market share.



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We produce around 180 to 200 pairs of boots a day in our Malaga factory in Perth, and have a number of factories in Jakarta. We sell into the Australian, New Zealand and Asian markets, and we are about to enter the South African market.

**Daniella Halikis, IT Operations Manager**  
Steel Blue Boots



# Challenges

## INCREASED SHIPPING AND RECEIVING FUNCTIONS OUTPACED CAPACITY

Expanding a manufacturing and distribution company can be a complex process and Steel Blue experienced its fair share of challenges.

Adjusting its supply chain to accommodate new production facilities and distribution channels was a key challenge.

Steel Blue sells their footwear across 40 countries. Prior to partnering with Epicor, Steel Blue's business management systems were unable to keep up with the increased shipping and receiving functions across multiple warehouses.

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“We manufacture a range of boots with different styles and classes. Based on colour and size we have around 8,000 stock keeping units,” says Daniella.

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For Steel Blue this involved building new relationships with distribution partners, coordinating shipping and logistics across larger distances, and managing inventory across multiple locations.

However, with no access to real-time data and statistics of their stock, inefficiencies and delays in distribution were becoming problematic, productivity was suffering, and they were unable to respond quickly to market changes.

Steel Blue had undergone a rapid period of growth but lacked the technological processes and systems to sustain and grow the business.

The company had worked hard to build confidence in its products, with their full range of men's and women's safety boots meeting Australian, European and American Safety Standards. And, they were the only safety boot manufacturer endorsed by the Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA).

Despite this, Steel Blue was suffering from poor customer service satisfaction, owing greatly to the time it took to prepare and send orders.





Knowledge is powerful and if you don't have a good ERP system, you can't make good business decisions.

**Garry Johnson, Chief Executive Officer**  
Steel Blue Boots

## Solution

### INTEGRATED FUNCTIONS TO CONSOLIDATE THE ORDERING PROCESS

The Epicor Kinetic solution for manufacturing features strong material requirements planning (MRP) capabilities and enables an organisation to plan, schedule, execute and monitor its entire manufacturing business.

Blue Steel needed an innovative software solution that provided flexibility as the company grew. From raw materials to final product, Epicor ERP provided Steel Blue with a greater level of flexibility and agility.

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“We use MRP to create the demand – Epicor prints out the job traveller which goes to the floor and goes through the manufacturing process from start to finish,” says Daniella.

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Manufacturing is a large part of what Steel Blue does, however from a logistics point of view, they are also a distributor so superior material management functionality was important.

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“We have a lot of stock in Perth and we opened up a 3PL in Brisbane to service our East Coast customers. We manage our 3PL relationship through Epicor and it helps us to cut costs with shipping. It has saved us a lot of time and improved efficiency,” Daniella explains.

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One of the biggest benefits identified by Steel Blue is the role Epicor plays in supporting the company’s on-going supply chain management. Epicor helps achieve supply chain visibility and remove processes that do not add value. It equips manufacturers to meet customer demands for faster delivery and lower cost by synchronising processes within and outside the company.

Steel Blue’s operations were further enhanced by Epicor’s integrated financial management and sales management functionalities.

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“Apart from the core production management manufacturing module, we use Epicor ERP for finance, sales, and material management,” continues Daniella.

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Epicor helped Steel Blue to automate and streamline their financial operations, including invoicing, billing, and accounting. They were able to generate accurate financial statements, forecast cash flow, and manage expenses, ensuring that they had a clear understanding of their financial position.

# Results

## DISTRIBUTION BEST PRACTICES

The most valuable feature of Epicor Kinetic is how you can configure dashboards and analytics to understand exactly what you need to know in real-time. This improved production planning helped Steel Blue to plan and schedule their production efficiently.

They were able to optimise their production cycles by automating the process of generating work orders, scheduling production, and managing materials requirements. In turn, this ensured Steel Blue's manufacturing process ran smoothly and reduced the risk of bottlenecks or delays.

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“Once the boots are boxed, we go into time and expense entry and submit and close the job ticket. Our manufacturing manager uses Epicor to run dashboards and reports to manage materials and BOMs. We run MRP once a week and it allows us to plan our production seven days ahead. It makes the system – and so our operations – more efficient,” explains Daniella.

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Epicor has enabled Steel Blue to implement distribution best practices and deliver easily accessible productivity data for managers within each warehouse.

The level of integrations is crucial and helps drive consolidation of ordering processes. With Epicor Kinetic, Steel Blue reduced the time it took to prepare orders by 10-15%.

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“Customer service experience improved significantly,” Jeff says.

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Steel Blue was able to combine multiple orders into one box for improved productivity and the ease of the customer, while keeping separate invoices per order for the customer company.

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“It used to take us five to seven days to get stock from Perth to Brisbane, whereas now it takes us two to four days. We also use Epicor to manage our stock levels and get insight into what type of stock is coming out of Brisbane to our East Coast customers,” explains Daniella.

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The company that has now sold more than 11 million pairs of boots chose Epicor because of its manufacturing industry expertise and used the services of Precise Business Solutions for the rollout and implementation of their Epicor project.

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“Precise have assisted us in implementing many proactive projects and their consultant’s increasing abilities to get the job done and work side by side with Epicor Australia has been beneficial. They always ensure the clients are getting the best possible service,” adds Daniella.

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Precise Business Solutions is a Western Australian-based company that has been providing ERP solutions since 1995. With a project of this scope using a locally based business with this level of experience is pivotal to assure a smooth roll out.

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“It has been helpful and beneficial to have this service available in the same time zone and only a phone call away,” Daniella reflects.

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With Epicor ERP, Steel Blue has streamlined manufacturing, supplier relationships, gained efficiencies, and increased visibility across the organisation.

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“With the ongoing support of Precise Business Solutions, Steel Blue has consistently evolved our ERP capabilities to aid the business’s changing needs and expansion,” remarks Daniella.

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Now Steel Blue is able to make strategic, data-driven decisions using the capabilities of Epicor Kinetic.





An Enterprise Resource Planning system can revolutionise the way a business operates. Helping to solve business challenges that have slowly been getting worse over time, and empowering businesses with the agility and flexibility needed to pivot quickly in our ever changing business landscape.

**Mark Batina, Managing Director**  
Precise Business Solutions

## Focus on what's important to your business.

Precise gives you the software solutions expertise you need to make everyday business processes easier and more efficient.



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