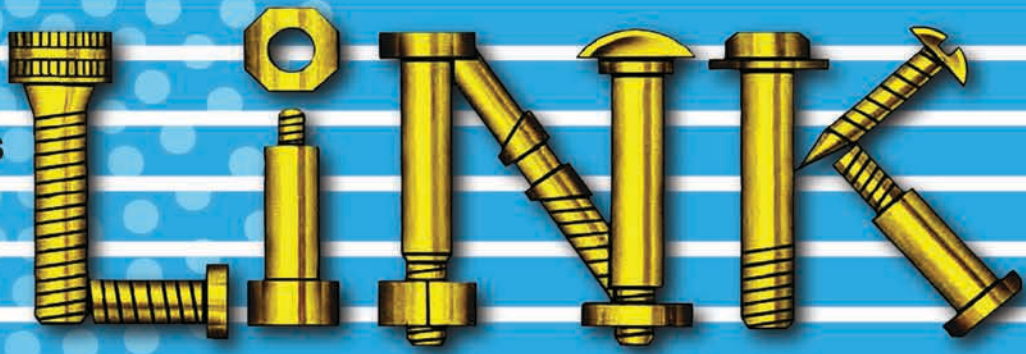


THE
DISTRIBUTOR'S



THE NATIONAL MAGAZINE FOR FASTENER DISTRIBUTORS



The Business Edge

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Streamline your business and save time, effort and money - find out how on page 16



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OUR INDUSTRY LEADING SOFTWARE IS JUST THE START...

by Dennis Cowhey
President, Computer Insights Inc

INTRODUCTION

Computer Insights has created an ERP system that helps distributors of fasteners and industrial supplies do more with less. The system is called **The Business Edge**. There are several reasons why selecting the right system for your business is paramount. Will your existing system help you manage the realities of future M&A's or the increasing challenges of retaining your workforce? Will it help reduce friction in your supply chain and help strengthen relationships with strategic partners? Should the condition of the world economy affect your decision to invest in a new system? *How can The Business Edge help you?*

IN THE BEGINNING

Computer Insights was founded by my father, Denny Cowhey, in 1981, a month before Microsoft existed. At

the time, everyone and his brother was starting a computer company. Like so many of the others, Computer Insights offered computer systems to small and medium size companies that were designed to take advantage of new affordable computers. Almost all of the computer companies founded in this period failed in the first 90 days. Staying in front of constantly changing and emerging technology is as much of a challenge today as it was then.

In 1998 we changed our focus from custom programming to creating an ERP specifically for distributors of fasteners and industrial supplies.

While we are very successful at navigating the ever changing technical world, we attribute our longevity to the fact that from the start we put our customers first. More than anything, the mission of Computer Insights



“The Business Edge has helped grow our business as well as making it easy for our customers to do business with us”

Simmi Sakhuja, Stelfast

THE BEST SOFTWARE FOR TRACKING YOUR FASTENERS
INNOVATIVE ERP SOLUTIONS THAT ALLOW YOU TO SAVE TIME, EFFORT & MONEY

was to help people run their companies more efficiently. Our driving force has always been the customer experience. “If you are not happy, we are not happy” has been baked into our company’s culture from day one. The years have flown by and we have seen countless changes in hardware, operating systems and programming languages. The only thing that has not changed is our focus on listening to customers and delivering systems they need to run their companies successfully.

M&A

According to Nate Nead, Principal at Investment Bank, “Roughly 10 million (or 65% to 75%) of all small companies will be up for sale in the next 10 years”.

There are three sides to this:
you are buying

a company, you are selling your company, or you are going to continue business as usual. Choosing the best ERP software system as your platform is important for each of these

BUYING - We have already seen an increase in M&A activity among our installed base and prospects. In the past few years we have helped companies on board new acquisitions into their existing system. This process is similar to a company switching from one ERP to another but it comes with extra challenges. Working closely with our customers we have developed tools and procedures to help with the process.

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SELLING - It can take up to a full year to prepare your company for sale. In that time you may be forced to look at your company in ways that you are not used to. If you learn that your successful company is not exciting enough to potential buyers, the process could take longer. Implementing an ERP system that helps you reduce costs and increase efficiencies will boost your valuation. **The Business Edge** has a proven track record of helping companies sell more with fewer people.

The ease of getting data out of a system and flexible financial reporting is another key component to getting the most from the sale of your company. Motor City Fastener, a company using **The Business Edge**, was acquired and merged with other companies to become Motor City Industrial in 2017. Joe Stephens, a key person in the transaction says, "When selling a company, business intelligence is critical. Ultimately, a buyer needs to understand your business as it relates to customers, industries served, and people. **The Business Edge** provided our company a robust reporting package that made communicating our value simple and reliable. Our potential acquirers were able to see, in great detail, the composition of our business."

BUSINESS AS USUAL - If you think "business as usual" means you won't be affected by the M&A activity, think again. It's not you, it's them. It is unlikely that none of your customers or vendors will be bought or sold. As this happens, relationships and expectations will change quickly. It will take time and focus to navigate these changes successfully. You will need a system that makes it easy to merge customers, vendors and even products. If you have to spend time searching for pricing, contacts, history, notes, etc. you will miss opportunities and risk damaging new relationships.

FINDING (AND KEEPING) GOOD PEOPLE

It has always been hard to find good people; it is

only going to get harder. The importance of being able to do more with fewer people has never been more urgent. According to Nicole Martin's book, *The Talent Emergency*, "The Bureau of Labor Statistics studies have released statistics reporting nearly 26 million workers will exit the talent pool by 2020. With skill shortages on the horizon, those that differentiate themselves as employers of choice will have a competitive advantage in attracting talent." Many features in **The Business Edge** were designed to make people more efficient. The system puts all of the information you need, where you need it, when you need it. The immediate access to information empowers everyone in your organization. A system that helps answer every question quickly and keeps things moving reduces the stress of everyone involved. Lower stress decreases the likelihood of losing your best people.

I talked to Terri O'Barski from Hayes Bolt today and she let me know that, "people used to freak out on days that a lot of orders came in." That doesn't happen any more, she goes on to say, "Ever since we introduced barcode scanning for stocking and picking we can handle a much greater volume of transactions with the same amount of time. Everyone is calmer these days."

Doug Tereba from Metal Resource Solutions comments on bringing in new employees, "As a small company, it is very important that new employees become productive as quickly as possible. Whether it is sales or purchasing, onboarding new employees has been quick and easy because of how intuitive **The Business Edge** is."

I was talking to Kevin Chappell of Ababa Bolt at the IFE 2019 show. I asked him how things were going and his response speaks volumes, "I thought business was down things were so quiet. It turns out, since we starting using **The Business Edge** we are getting more done with less effort."

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The simple solution with a proven step-by-step method for unlocking your fastener company's potential.

Let us demonstrate how The Business Edge™ can streamline your business and save you time, effort and money.

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THE ECONOMY

No matter if you are bullish or bearish about the years to come, it is the best time to consider improving your systems.

GOOD TIMES - It is more difficult to find a consensus when looking for a year the economy was “good” and it is complicated further by arguments over what metrics should be used to define it.

Streamlining your processes and easy access to information is crucial to growing your company without losing control. Without a system that can deliver both you will fail to meet customers expectations.

Jim Law of Ababa Bolt bought **The Business Edge** in 2016 when he felt the economy was heading in the right direction. His thoughts on investing in technology in a strong economy are, “Like too many things in the past, when the business is robust, and pressure is lessened, I tend to take a breather from the more hectic days of coming off of a soft business environment, even though I now have the extra time for business improvement. Well, this time, I decided to get off my butt and do some things that were needed—one being the upgrade of our software system. We were lucky, we not only “found” (with much work) a good solution but also as important the right company—an actual partner that took us not only through the implementation but also beyond.”

BAD TIMES - Even during “The Great Recession” of 2008, it was a good time to invest in an ERP system.

Joe Stephens of Motor City Industrial recently shared with me his thoughts on why a down economy is a good time to buy a new computer system and how going live with **The Business Edge** in 2008 helped. “In the midst of a recession, business leaders must cut expenses. It’s unfortunate and difficult, but unavoidable. In the midst of the stress of a declining business, we often lose sight of how important information is. An economic downturn makes installing a new operating system unattractive,



“The Business Edge has allowed us to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our staff”

but it is usually the most critical time to do it. The business intelligence necessary to navigate an eroding revenue model make investing in more robust IT systems a critical decision. In fact, it may be the most important decision. Economic downturns are difficult, but even harder if you don’t have the information you need to make decisions. MCI made this tough decision, and it allowed us to see which customer verticals were growing and declining. This allowed us to shift our strategy toward higher growth opportunities.”

Andy Bain says American Bolt Corp was not greatly affected by the recession of 2008 because of their diverse customer base. He followed that up by stating, “**The Business Edge** has allowed American Bolt to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our staff. The technology has allowed us to easily scale with increased demand and requirements from our customers.”

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STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE FASTENER SUPPLY CHAIN NETWORK (FSCN)

It is all about relationships. Everyone is involved: from our customers to their suppliers, sourcing sites and others that can help our customers succeed.

SUPPLIERS - We are in our tenth year of being connected to the well known master distributor: Brighton-Best International. In that time we have added to our list of suppliers we are connected with: Kanebridge Corporation, Stelfast Inc, and XL Screw Corporation. We have plans to add Metrics and Multistandard Components and Vertex in 2020. We continue to have open dialogs with other suppliers and expect to continue to create new relevant connections. These robust connections allow you to access live pricing and availability from your suppliers without leaving **The Business Edge**. All of the information, no matter where it is coming from, is presented in the same look and feel you are used to. Prices and availability are checked against live data during purchase order entry. In addition, the suppliers' package quantities are used to ensure the quantity you are ordering makes sense. Time is saved on both sides of the transaction when you order a quantity that can be delivered at a price that has been agreed on from a location that has it available to ship. Electronic submission of your PO's saves more time and earns you any web discounts that would apply if you ordered from the web.

Peggy Hsieh of Brighton-Best International shares, "Ten years ago, BBI's relationship with Computer Insights started with a chance encounter at an industry event dinner. Although Dennis and I didn't know each other

well, we trusted each other's commitment to the distributors/customers and saw their need to increase efficiencies in day-to-day transactions. We could not have known what would come from that meeting, but I could not be more proud of the impact that the BBI Connection with Computer Insights had on our mutual customers."

Simmi Sakhuja of Stelfast, "The core of our business is based on strong customer relationships and one of the keys is listening to our customers. When customers asked us to partner with Dennis, we jumped at the opportunity. In a short period of time, **The Business Edge** has helped grow our business as well as making it easy for our customers to do business with us. Computer Insights have been a wonderful partner in this sector."

SOURCING SITES - Our relationships with popular inventory sourcing sites can help if you are: looking for inventory, want to find people to buy from you or both. Search and upload inventory without ever leaving **The Business Edge**. Connections currently include: FCH, Nationwide, ILS Mart & PartsBase. Chris Bourque of PartsBase, "Everyone was impressed with the speed Computer Insights was able to get a connection up and running with PartsBase. They have been a joy to work with both on the personal side and the technical side."

OTHERS - With the use of industry standard tools, **The Business Edge** allows outside developers to read, write and respond to requests all connected to live data. Some of the third party developers we work with include but are not limited to: AmericanEagle, Apex Supply Chain Technologies, Avalara AvaTax, CardConnect, eCreativeWorks, Intuilize and VendNovation. Mark of Avalara, "Computer Insights went above and beyond when they developed their Avalara AvaTax integration."



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SOURCING
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STRATEGIC
PARTNERS



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THE FUTURE

If you think in terms of five year plans, ten year plans, or if you like to fly by the seat of your pants; we're all heading into the unknown. Some of your plans will work out, and some will fail for a wide variety of reasons. What will not change is the human experience, and the importance of relationships.

Economies will rise and fall. Companies will come and go. Technology will never stop changing. It is our relationships that define us as individuals and as organizations.

Computer Insights continues to push the envelope on the technology front. We started as agile developers, long before the term was coined. Many of our projects start on beta versions of emerging tools. Leveraging features from a combination of industry standard and proprietary tools we are able to offer the most user friendly interface available today. From our contemporary use of tabs to unique screen components no one else comes close. Changing what you see on your screen is as simple as checking boxes and dragging and dropping things. Five years from now, many of the tools we use will be obsolete or drastically different than they are today. We would be naive to think any differently and are ready to embrace the changes.

Linda of Accurate Manufactured Products, "I love all of the information on one screen and the fact that I get to see more when I use a bigger higher resolution screen!"

Our goals are the same as they were since the beginning. Do our best to listen to what people want and consistently over deliver.

MORE COMMENTS FROM PEOPLE WE WORK WITH:

Bob Baer of Abbott Interfast, "One of the best things that can happen in business is when your suppliers also become your friends and one relationship does not affect the other. Over the last 20 years we have spent a lot of time with Denny, Diane & Dennis at industry events, social events and got to know the Computer Insights Team on a more personal level."

Jim Hegedus of Unlimited Supplies, "Computer Insights has become like family. Mostly good times with a few rocky ones. They are always there to help us on our journey, and we have prospered greatly with their support."

Bill Browning of Allied Inventory Systems, "I found Computer Insights over 20 years ago when we needed software to take us into the next century. Choosing them was tantamount to choosing a marriage partner. Looking back, it was the single most important decision we made."

CONCLUSION

If you are a distributor of fasteners and industrial supplies and want to do more with less, fill out our short survey to find out if The Business Edge by Computer Insights is right for you. *Complete the survey at www.ci-inc.com/survey.*

Let us demonstrate how The Business Edge™ can streamline your business and save you time, effort and money

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