

Customer success story

United States Brass & Copper: A story of metals ERP success

How Crowe helped a metals service center grow their business while others were fighting for survival



United States Brass & Copper secured sustainable growth with a metals-specific ERP.

As a family-owned metals service center since 1925, United States Brass & Copper (USBC) is a leader in providing the highest quality mill products throughout North America.

For nearly a century, USBC has earned a reputation as a leader in their industry by providing outstanding customer service, quality, and competitive pricing – with a vast and varied inventory of aluminum, brass, bronze, beryllium copper, copper, and stainless steel products.¹

USBC is constantly looking to advance in new levels of technology. However, as they looked into Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) providers, it was clear that the solutions did not fit USBC's metals-specific needs. Instead of growing and reaching new customers, the challenges posed by their older software held them back.



The problem

Outdated systems created a painful barrier to growth.

Over several years, it was clear USBC's outdated systems were slowing down their growth. A system that was initially designed for distribution had become a massive headache for the entire team.

Essential processes for accounting, sales, inventory, and production were frustrating and labor intensive.



Our system forced our team to create workarounds, which caused many frustrations and inefficiencies. The lack of data visibility made decision-making very challenging, holding back our business from accomplishing more.

Dave Kavanaugh, **CEO**
United States Brass & Copper



Complicated workarounds and increased paperwork were hurting efficiency and productivity, creating issues in crucial areas:

01 Inefficient processes

Manual processes with a large volume of paperwork created delays and a lack of visibility across every business area – teams were collaborating but struggling to serve their customers effectively.

02 Unreliable reporting

Manual data entry meant that reporting historical, current, and future forecasting positions was slow and created extra work for key production employees.

03 Delayed invoicing

Invoices were created manually and mailed to customers, causing unnecessary delays and inconsistent cash flow.

04 Inaccurate inventory

Accessing accurate, real-time inventory was a challenge, leading to difficulties purchasing material and using remnant coil inventory.

05 Ineffective MTR tracking

USBC was tracking metals manually – a process that created a frustrating barrier in providing material test report (MTR) certification.

06 Limited production visibility

Employees had to navigate through a maze of phone calls or emails to access essential delivery information, leading to delays in providing immediate delivery updates.

07 Gaps in metals-specific functionality

Accessing metals production planning features and viewing different units of measure, types of metals, and pricing by unit was possible, but it was slow and inefficient.

The COVID-19 pandemic

While USBC had internal efficiency barriers, there was a more devastating problem on the horizon for metals businesses like theirs: **Adapting to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

From outdated systems to an out-of-the-box ERP tailored for metals businesses.

Given the growing impact of painful inefficiencies, Crowe knew USBC needed a metals industry-specific ERP to bring a critical change. Specifically, they needed an ERP implemented in a predictable and timely manner without the need for costly customizations.

Crowe Metals Accelerator is designed for metals businesses like USBC and built on top of Microsoft Dynamics 365™. The Crowe team offered a fast, proven, and prescriptive implementation methodology to transform their future.

01 ERP discovery

After understanding the business needs of USBC, Crowe gave a structured walk-through of Crowe Metals Accelerator and Dynamics 365, including its design, purpose, and metals-specific functionalities.

02 Data structure

To support a smooth transition to Crowe Metals Accelerator and Dynamics 365, Crowe provided detailed templates and guidance to structure and data formatting that would be imported into the Microsoft platform.

03 Conference room pilot

To give the USBC team a view of their future state, Crowe used experience and best practices to pilot the new system. Handheld devices on the shop floor simulated USBC's specific business transactions in a preconfigured environment.

04 User acceptance testing

A collaborative testing and feedback process provided a healthy transition of ownership to USBC's entire team, starting with the core team and then the broader team.

05 Cutover rehearsal

A detailed rehearsal gave specific steps to migrate and align everything from inventory, orders, financials, and general ledger balances.

06 End-user training

Crowe led end-user training, providing user manuals and conducting hands-on walk-throughs using the essential functionality of Crowe Metals Accelerator and Dynamics 365.

07 Go-live support and remote delivery

Crowe provided additional on-site personnel across three locations to support a successful launch. These teams provided insight into the operations, which guided the USBC team through solutions in real time and helped identify super-users to enhance success.

After fostering solid relationships, the onset of COVID-19 led Crowe to transition to a remote delivery model and continue to train personnel and support USBC's ongoing operations.

Constructive, collaborative,
and specialized guidance
led to success.



The Crowe team was both constructive and collaborative. They said the things we needed to hear and guided us in important decisions to make the solution successful. In addition, they took time to teach and empower us to solve problems on our own.

DJ Kavanaugh, **VP**
United States Brass & Copper



The outcomes

Incredible growth from a metals-specific ERP – implemented in just 6 months.

Microsoft Dynamics 365 with Crowe Metals Accelerator was implemented in a rapid six-month time frame. The go-live date was March 2, 2020 – two weeks before a remote workforce was born out of the COVID-19 lockdowns.

The pandemic would make it almost impossible for a metals service center to function – let alone thrive. But despite these challenges, by working with Crowe, USBC beat the odds and experienced incredible growth.



Remote access

With Dynamics 365 cloud functionality, many of their team could continue operations remotely during lockdowns – something they would not have been able to do previously.



Real-time visibility

The Crowe Metals Accelerator allows the USBC team to access accurate real-time and historical data across departments and every area of their business.



Customer growth

Because of clear visibility and efficient inventory management, and despite the uncertainty of fluctuating metals costs,

as of October 2021, USBC has seen an increase of 20% in new customers.



Accurate reporting

Lengthy reporting delays and manual calculations have been replaced by easy-to-use inquiries, which can easily be exported to Microsoft Excel™ spreadsheet software.



Immediate invoicing

Invoicing delays and paper trails stopped being a frustrating dilemma, as accounts could be paid quickly and efficiently, and cash flow is more predictable.



Maximized sales

The sales team gained the ability to access immediate and accurate pricing and create detailed sales orders that include an order number, pricing, ownership, and delivery estimates.



Optimized inventory

With an accurate picture of inventory and an efficient system for handling remnants, USBC was able to grow its profits by optimizing remnants and saving time by forecasting future orders.



Confidence in MTR

Traceability of metals became a streamlined process with Crowe Metals Accelerator and Dynamics 365. As a result, MTR certification can be created, accessed, and delivered efficiently to customers.



Production progress

Following a product from order to delivery became a streamlined process for USBC's employees and customers. Real-time updates have replaced painful communication delays.



Tailored metals ERP

Processes like working with different measurement units, inventorying metal types, pricing by unit, and planning metals production are now easy, efficient, and specific to the metals business.



By working with Crowe and investing in the right technology at the right time, United States Brass & Copper can now respond to the many supply chain challenges our industry is experiencing today. The new system is working extremely well, benefitting our company and our valued customers.

DJ Kavanaugh, VP
United States Brass & Copper

Adaptability and sustainability deliver confidence.

By working with Crowe, USBC implemented Microsoft Dynamics 365 with Crowe Metals Accelerator **within six months**. As a result, with a cloud-based ERP for the metals industry, they can anticipate demand, plan inventory, and adjust with confidence.

Despite unpredictable supply chain issues and ever-changing market conditions, United States Brass & Copper is building a foundation for sustainable growth.

If you are looking to transform your metals business and build a sustainable future with an ERP tailored to the metals industry, we can help you get started today.

Contact  tad.balanda@crowe.com

The Crowe standard

Here at Crowe, we pride ourselves on exceptional, industry-specific solutions with lasting value.

Our dedicated professionals walk alongside our clients, committing to collaboration and connecting deep industry knowledge with innovative technology.

By listening to our clients' needs, we can learn about their businesses and the unique challenges they face. We forge each relationship to deliver exceptional client service while upholding our core values and strong professional standards. We invest in tomorrow because we know smart decisions build lasting success for our clients, people, and profession.



¹ <https://usbrassandcopper.com/about-us/>

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