



## At a glance

### Solution

- PanatrackerGP
- Microsoft Dynamics GP

### Objective

Automate and speed inventory handling to reduce miscounts, increase accuracy and enhance customer satisfaction.

### Benefits

- Capture of inventory transactions when and where they occur, with accountability
- Bar code data capture has increased speed and accuracy
- An additional 160 hours per month in productivity gains
- Real-time access to inventory information

## Panatrack Raises the Bar on Inventory and Procurement Management

Best Bar is a leading Australian steel reinforcement supplier, delivering a diverse range of reinforcement solutions to the civil, commercial and residential construction industries.

The organisation was established in Western Australia as a family business in 1995 and continues to be managed by these founding members. In 2000 Best Bar established a partnership with NatSteel, which saw the company expand its market into the Asia Pacific region. In 2005 Best Bar became part of the internationally renowned Tata Steel Group, further expanding access to multiple supply points and cost-effective materials. Today Best Bar employs some 300 skilled workers in branches across Australia and its products are used by almost all of Australia's large civil engineering and construction firms as well as by local residential builders.

## Keeping count of inventory

In just over 15 years Best Bar has experienced an immense amount of change, growing from start-up to become a market leader. Along the way it has had to continually reassess processes to keep pace with the company's maturing operations.

One of the processes most recently targeted for updating was the company's inventory and procurement management. An analysis of transactions relating to the movement of inventory throughout the Best Bar network had highlighted problems with the company's system of manual documentation. Whenever an item was taken from inventory, employees were required to enter data such as product description, quantity, origin and destination into one of a number of controlled books maintained in various store and production departments. These documents would work their way through the business before ending up at inventory control to be key punched and processed. A central register was used to track the documents to help ensure that no transactions were missed.



The problem was inventory could move from stock to finished goods in a matter of minutes, yet the manual transaction required to record that move could take up to 24 hours. The longer the delay, the greater the likelihood of inaccuracies creeping in. In addition, manual processes were judged to be high-risk due to the ever-present potential for accidental data transposition.

Geoff Pember, Best Bar's Group Materials Logistics and Procurement Manager, explains, "Some years ago we implemented Microsoft Dynamics GP as our finance system. This brought the ability to manage inventory transactions and integrated it with our finance system but the missing component was how to get information from the factory floor into the system."

The solution, Pember realised, was to automate inventory transactions.

**“...we brought in Professional Advantage and they assisted us to get the best out of the GP package.”**

### The benefit of integration

Having worked on a similar project in the past, Pember knew what he wanted from a software automation solution and it didn't take long for him to select the Panatracker GP auto data capture solution.

Specially designed to work with Microsoft Dynamics GP, Panatracker leverages the inventory and asset tracking databases already contained within the financial software to deliver a tightly integrated inventory solution. The software eliminates paper-based tracking and duplicate transaction recording, thus reducing the potential for errors from re-keying data. Bar code capture enables real-time recording and validation of data, improving accuracy and timeliness of records.

"I'd had experience with a similar package and we knew that the methodologies of Panatracker were strong when applied back down to the shop floor and by people in the yard," Pember says.

To manage the deployment, Pember sought the assistance of Professional Advantage. "When we did our initial Microsoft Dynamics GP implementation we'd had some issues and problems with support," Pember notes. "To remedy this, we brought in Professional Advantage and they assisted us to get the best out of the GP package. Since then we've also used them to implement a Microsoft SharePoint application that has



delivered a lot of administrative functionality. Their support desk has been very, very strong and it just made sense to continue working with them."

The deployment was fast and smooth. The bolt-on nature of Panatracker meant there was no real business risk for Best Bar – only the potential to achieve positive change.

When the solution was ready to roll, Pember appointed champions to encourage acceptance of the new technology and process. Discipline was also important. Check points were established throughout the facility to enforce the use of scanning and documentation before an item of inventory could be moved. "It only took a few weeks to get the discipline in," Pember says.

### The new flow

Panatracker is now used to manage all inventory transfers, an inventory move, assembly transactions, inventory adjustments, stock receiving and label printing.

Pember describes the new process saying, "The basic concept of the system is to have inventory transactions performed at the point of origin within a controlled environment. Staff use RF [radio frequency] hand held units to quickly enter transactions which are entered directly into Microsoft Dynamics GP.

"Their support desk has been very, very strong and it just made sense to continue working with them."

"For example if a user wants to move stock from the yard to the factory, they simply select the item to move enter the quantity and hit enter. The transaction is fully recorded within GP in seconds versus the five minutes worth of processing we had under our manual system. The other major advantage is the transaction is instant versus the up-to-24 hour delay previously experienced," he explains.



## The Benefits

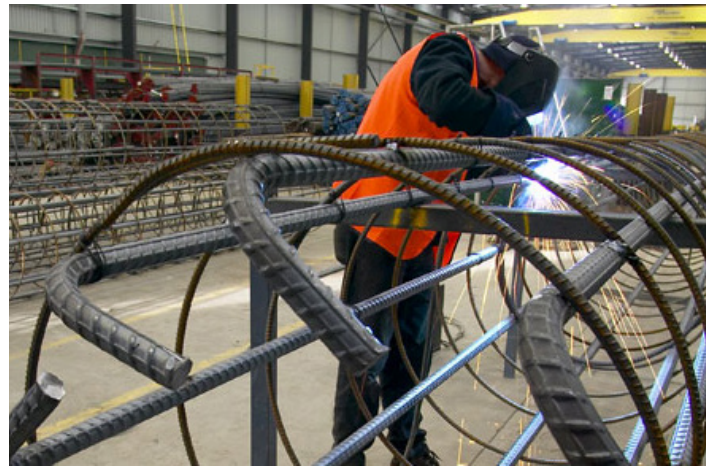
As hoped, the solution has eliminated paper-based tracking and removed the need for duplicate data entry. Inventory information is available in real time and all inventory transactions are now captured when and where they occur. Direct integration with Microsoft Dynamics GP ensures that any inventory changes are immediately reflected in the company's financial system.

Bar code data capture has brought new speed and accuracy to inventory management. Staff on the shop floor have been equipped with easy-to-navigate scanning devices that guide the user through - and validate - each transaction.

"When we plan to manufacture something, the schedulers send all the planning documents to the shop floor to move goods through the factory," Pember notes. "That documentation has all the bar codes necessary for the goods for that plan. There are no longer any hand-written processes involved in the shop floor process."

Calculating the time it used to take to write up forms and enter them into the system, Pember estimates that the new process has given Best Bar an additional 160 hours per month in productivity gains. "That equates to maybe an hour per month per person on the shop floor and it's a significant amount for us. I don't see any value in machine operators doing data transactions and they were never happy having to do it.

"Best of all, we can now rely on the accuracy and integrity of the data reviewed to make effective business decisions," Pember observes.



## About us

Professional Advantage is one of Australia's most awarded solutions providers, with over 20 years experience in helping organisations improve their business systems through industry leading software solutions. Our 250-strong team in 6 offices across Australia and internationally has successfully worked with over 1000 organisations.

### For more information

**Call:** 1800 126 499

**Visit:** [www.pa.com.au](http://www.pa.com.au)

**Email:** [enquiries@pa.com.au](mailto:enquiries@pa.com.au)