



 CentricSoftware™

**MAKING GOOD PRODUCTS
BETTER WITH PLM
A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP FROM
CAMELBAK AND CENTRIC SOFTWARE**

CAMELBAK

OBSESSIVE INNOVATION

In 1989, cycling enthusiast Michael Eidson approached the starting line of the aptly-named “Hotter’N Hell,” a hundred-mile race through the summertime Texas heat. Not wanting the burden of bottled water, Michael, who worked as an EMT at the time, had filled an IV bag with water, wrapped it in a sock and pinned it to his shoulder. While other racers stopped to fiddle with bottle tops, a tube running to Michael’s mouth allowed him to stay on the road and stay hydrated, hands-free. The rest is history.

In the last thirty years, CamelBak’s core products - wearable water packs - have gone from being sold unit-by-unit off the back of a motorcycle to leading the market in outdoor hydration. Today those packs are joined by bottles, purification kits and other drinkware designed for cycling, ski and snow, running, mountain biking and a range of military and tactical applications.

Headquartered in wine country in Petaluma, California, CamelBak culture is all about, as Paul Rattay, PLM Manager puts it, “making good products better by working smarter”. In practice, this means an obsession with innovation and quality, combining the trademark Got Your Bak™ lifetime guarantee with an insistent drive to improve performance and introduce new products.



TSUNAMIS AND TRIBAL KNOWLEDGE

This constant reinvention adds a huge amount of complexity to CamelBak’s product creation cycles, as Rattay explains.

“At any given time we might have five different seasons in active development, spread across our different product lines. Each season could potentially house several hundred discrete styles, amounting to thousands of SKUs of finished goods. Getting all of those products over the finish line involves the same critical functional teams working across multiple seasons and communicating between four different sites in three different countries.”

CamelBak identified critical bottlenecks in its product design and development processes which were being managed in disconnected spreadsheets. With internal teams and manufacturing partners spread around the world, the company’s ability to collaborate across so many styles and SKUs rested on the shoulders of a select few staff –Rattay and his team knew this was not a sustainable arrangement.

“We had too few people doing too much manual data management,” he says, “with one offline team funneling their work to another, until it eventually landed in the laps of this small group of individuals who had the monumental task of putting everything into some semblance of a system to send to suppliers and share with our internal departments.”

This resulted in what Rattay calls a “tsunami of work” whereby key product data and milestone tasks were passed from function to function, with no standardization of processes and extremely limited sharing of knowledge.

“The unintended consequence of working this way was that we had a lot of what I call tribal knowledge: where key individuals have, over time, become the only people who know how to handle their segment of the product lifecycle,” Rattay says. “Our spreadsheets were really just receptacles for information; our people were the ones driving the processes. And of course, when one of them took time off, everything would grind to a halt.”

Challenges

- + All planning, design and development conducted offline
- + Bottlenecks in key processes and limited knowledge sharing
- + Informal system struggling to manage critical compliance data
- + Need to onboard users with no prior system experience
- + Time-sensitive implementation

“ This was a huge transformation for us, and it happened at an extremely sensitive time for the business,” says Rattay. “We had just introduced a new reservoir design and that meant redesigning 90% of our pack line, but even with that added challenge we managed our initial go-live in just twelve weeks. In my experience of high technology and SaaS deployments, that’s a remarkable figure.”

TRANSPARENCY AND TIME TO MARKET

The need for greater collaboration and process standardization was not just driven by these bottlenecks. Visibility throughout the extended supply chain was also critical to CamelBak's business.

"We face some unique regulatory and compliance challenges," explains Rattay. "More than 90% of our products have to be tested for water contact safety. And because we're a global company, we need to demonstrate that we meet domestic FDA and Consumer Product Safety standards as well as EU equivalents and some very stringent military audit rules."

To sell to almost any channel, CamelBak must undergo regular supplier audits and maintain an archive of documentation for each individual guideline – something that was becoming all but impossible with an informal structure of networked drives and the goal of expanding into even more global markets.

At the same time, CamelBak faced the common challenge of tightening its time to market. "Our markets are always shifting and we're faced with needing to grow our business without sacrificing the level of quality and innovation we've become known for," Rattay says. "These changing dynamics mean that we're constantly forced to reinvent ourselves, so it was vital that we find a new way of engaging with all our critical functions - reducing duplication of effort, and making methods, work, effort and results visible to everyone involved. Working offline, we were forever hunting for information that we knew a modern PLM solution could instead put online and make available to everyone, increasing our transparency and speed to market at the same time."



THE RIGHT PLM FIT: FLEXIBLE AND USER-FRIENDLY

Although CamelBak had a legacy PLM system in place, its critical design and development processes were being managed exclusively in Excel and user adoption was limited.

"Our previous system was geared around engineering specifications," explains Rattay. "It was useful at the end of the product lifecycle, for configuring products and pushing to suppliers, but it was lacking the bigger picture and couldn't manage multiple overlapping seasons – both of which were really important to us. So we looked at Centric PLM as a more comprehensive replacement for our legacy system."

While CamelBak as a business had PLM experience, Rattay and his team now needed to onboard people in design and development who had never had a system role before, so a welcoming user experience became a key criterion in their decision to work with Centric Software.

"The road to user adoption takes many forms and usability is one where Centric particularly excels," Rattay explains. "As well as having centralized, organized information like line plans and Bills of Material, they actually work with usability designers to constantly improve the workflow and streamline the steps it takes to do common tasks. We can now design different views for different user bases – one for product managers, one for costing and so on – and make the experience meaningful, and more efficient, for each user."

CamelBak also valued the configurability of Centric PLM's data model which allowed them to store critical compliance information from the top style level right down to the raw material.

"We expected to get a great software solution provider but what we didn't expect was how much we'd value Centric as a business partner," Rattay continues. "Their consultants helped analyze our needs and they remain part of our ongoing efforts. We're really beginning to understand how we can work better and I don't think that's something we could have done without the support of the Centric community."

OFFLINE TO ONLINE IN ONLY TWELVE WEEKS

CamelBak began its implementation of Centric PLM in November 2014 and launched in March of the following year.

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Today, all line planning has been brought online and more than 10 seasons have already been planned in Centric PLM. CamelBak currently has 6 seasons in active development, is managing around 800 styles and 2,000 SKUs in PLM, and has on boarded all key suppliers.

Results

- + Comprehensive process support for the entire product lifecycle
- + Seamless collaboration and data sharing between internal teams and suppliers
- + Compliance documentation associated with styles, colorways and raw materials
- + Intuitive UI has secured adoption with all key internal users and supply chain partners
- + Initial implementation completed in just 12 weeks



BENEFITS AND THE BIG PICTURE

Dramatically improving collaboration and bringing critical functions like line planning online has had an immediate impact on CamelBak's speed to market with time-consuming tasks like seasonal planning now tackled in a matter of minutes.

"Bringing our material library online was also massively important," adds Rattay. "We now have more than 3,000 discrete materials in PLM which has redefined the way we approach materials management across our entire business and given us a huge amount of room for innovation."

Since implementing Centric PLM, CamelBak has also been able to automate much of its costing, with system-driven calculations that take the company's complex costing model into account as well as their balance between wholly-owned manufacturing and contracts with trusted suppliers.

Equally important, Rattay explains, is the heightened visibility and accountability provided by PLM. "Working offline, people could only ever see their portion of the picture – not the big picture itself," he says. "There's nothing quite like being able to see, accurately and in an online environment, where things stand, rather than just being told."

Despite this success, Rattay believes that CamelBak is only scratching the surface when it comes to the potential of Centric PLM, "Our transformation is only just beginning. The tools we have now will help us adapt to the market and change as the industry changes. We now have access to data that will help us to benchmark and optimize how our teams function. We fully intend to build on our functional success and take full advantage of the complete Centric feature set."

ABOUT CAMELBAK

At CamelBak, our mission is to continuously reinvent and forever change the way people hydrate and perform. We are forward thinking inventors who value creative, unconventional ideas and unusual solutions to common problems. We believe that rest stops are over-rated. We push to be first, but also the best. We are fully dedicated to what we make, how we make it, for whom we make it and the way it impacts people's lives and the environment. In the end, passionate people make superior, meaningful products and we believe you'll experience the difference.

ABOUT CENTRIC SOFTWARE

From its headquarters in Silicon Valley and offices in trend capitals around the world, Centric Software builds technologies for the most prestigious names in fashion, retail, footwear, luxury, outdoor and consumer goods. Its flagship product lifecycle management (PLM) platform, Centric 8, delivers enterprise-class merchandise planning, product development, sourcing, business planning, quality and collection management functionality tailored for fast-moving consumer industries. Centric Small Business packages extended PLM including innovative technology and key industry learnings tailored for small businesses.

Centric Software has received multiple industry awards, including the Frost & Sullivan Global Product Differentiation Excellence Award in Retail, Fashion and Apparel PLM. Red Herring named Centric to its Top 100 Global list in 2013 and 2015.



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