

**STEPPING INTO THE FUTURE**  
SHOES FOR CREWS REBUILDS FROM THE  
GROUND UP WITH CENTRIC PLM



**SHOES**  
FOR CREWS®

## SAFETY FIRST

Shoes For Crews was founded in 1984, when husband-and-wife team Stanley and Arna Smith were running a home-based business producing nurses' shoes and uniforms in New York. Looking for potential new markets, they hit on the idea of producing shoes with slip-resistant soles for busy kitchens. The duo began making shoes with a unique outsole that would grip on slippery restaurant floors and Shoes For Crews took off.

For more than three decades, Shoes For Crews has been an industry leader in safety. Shoes For Crews footwear is worn in more than 100,000 workplaces worldwide. From kitchens to emergency rooms to factory floors, Shoes For Crews shoes protect people who work in slippery and hazardous environments and keep them comfortable for long hours on their feet. Shoes For Crews runs a very successful corporate program, allowing the employees of top restaurant chains, supermarkets, manufacturers and healthcare providers to purchase safe footwear from Shoes For Crews through their employers.

Shoes For Crews is headquartered in West Palm Beach, Florida and has a product development team in Portland, Oregon. The company owns its outsole factory in Qingdao, China, to maintain control of every step of the manufacturing process, and promises never to outsource safety. With distribution centers in the United States, Canada and Ireland, retail stores in Orlando and Las Vegas, and an online store, Shoes For Crews has come a long way from the Smiths' New York apartment.



## CREATING THE NEW SHOES FOR CREWS

In 2016 SFC launched an ambitious business transformation project that set out to revamp operations and the product design and development process. This wasn't just a superficial makeover; it included process and technology improvements, rebranding and building a new product line from the ground up. Nathan Crary, Executive Vice President, Supply Chain and Innovation, and his team aimed to leave behind the idea that work shoes had to be hard, heavy and sometimes ugly to be effective.

At precisely the same time, Shoes For Crews was expanding the company's portfolio with the acquisition of Genesco's SureGrip Footwear brand and began partnering with companies such as New Balance, Dockers and Dansko to add their patented non-slip outsoles to the silhouettes of best-selling styles produced by these globally recognized and respected brands.

Rebuilding the company from scratch during a period of growth and change presented huge logistical and management challenges, but for Shoes For Crews Project Manager Director, PLM & Product Development Pam Buckingham, it was the ideal time to put a PLM system in place. With over fifteen years of experience working with PLM systems at footwear and apparel companies, Buckingham is a dedicated PLM advocate. She knew that the right PLM solution would provide a solid foundation for Shoes For Crews during a time of challenge and development.

"We were building a new product development team that would bring design and development in house to ensure the best quality

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## RESULTS

- + Real-time collaboration saves time and money
- + Easy to track and manage critical safety information
- + System is intuitive and was adopted quickly by users
- + Data is no longer duplicated in different systems
- + Implemented in just 42 days

for our customers," she explains. "They were working extremely hard to produce the first of many completely new collections; 77 styles of footwear in a very short amount of time. At the start, they had been using email and Excel. That gets out of control, especially with a small team and the amount of work that they had to accomplish in an expedited timeframe. To support this intense period of product development and design, we needed a flexible and user-friendly PLM solution that could handle data effectively."

As she says, "Choosing the right PLM was the first step in improving our processes, because having a bulletproof item master and one source of the truth for style definition is the foundation for every other system in the company. If you think about it from a sourcing and supply chain management perspective, everything consumes master data. It must be one hundred percent accurate before you can take on other business processes from a technology standpoint."

## CHOOSING CENTRIC

Shoes For Crews started with a shortlist of six PLM vendors, which they quickly whittled down to two contenders. In December 2016, after a competitive process of applying PLM solutions to real-world data and scenarios, Shoes For Crews announced that it chose Centric.

"I've been doing PLM in the apparel and footwear space for the last fifteen years or so, so I'm pretty familiar with the different players out there," says Buckingham. "I had never worked with Centric personally, but upon lots of homework, investigation, interviews with colleagues and asking the Centric reps a million hard questions, Centric rose to the top as the best solution for Shoes For Crews."

"We wanted to see how it would work for us in real use cases day to day, not just see presentations with dummy data. Centric has functionality, ease of use, consistency throughout the product, an agile approach and the ability to install and go live a lot faster...it's very appealing, and I think it's going to be easy for our users to adopt."

## CLOUD-BASED SOLUTION ALLOWS SPEEDY IMPLEMENTATION

"Centric really stepped up to the mark!" exclaims Buckingham. "With the partnership of the Centric team, we cut our projected go-live date from May to April, and then ended up actually going live in March, just 42 business days after our kick-off date. I have enough experience with PLM implementations to know that's ridiculously fast. The system has super-slick functionality and was quickly populated with the necessary data to make user adoption easier."

For Shoes For Crews, it was essential to select a cloud-based solution. As Buckingham explains, "Because Centric operates in the cloud, it reduces the implementation time and data storage burden for us. It's lighter, faster, more cost-effective and more time-efficient. The future is in cloud-based PLM solutions and the benefits of an

## CHALLENGES

- + Growth and acquisitions put pressure on existing processes
- + Complete transformation of company from the ground up
- + New product development team needed support of PLM system
- + Need for internal processes to be more time- and cost-efficient
- + Short timeline for implementation

off-premise solution were obvious straight away when we saw the speed of deployment."

## STYLISH AND SAFE AS EVER

With the support of a team of footwear designers from performance athletic and fashion companies, Shoes For Crews launched its new range of footwear with improved comfort and style in April 2017. Buckingham remarks that the Centric PLM implementation is a key piece to realizing the vision and growth of the new Shoes For Crews.

"We have completely redesigned our product line with a focus on technology, style and comfort, but our shoes must protect people and we are primarily concerned with safety," she explains. "Having a PLM system in place has made it so much easier to track materials testing and certification – it can be done with the click of a button."

"We have noticed major efficiencies because of the ability to collaborate in real time," she continues. "Because everyone is connected and can work together closely, even though they are in different locations, it can take just a few minutes seconds to put together presentations that might have taken a week to produce previously."

"Having one centralized place to enter data, clear ownership of data and the ability to integrate that with all of our downstream systems is a massive time saver, which translates into cost savings down the line," she adds.

For Shoes For Crews, Centric's PLM solution gives the rejuvenated company a firm foundation for future growth.

"I am very selective about which vendors to work with, but Centric has been consistently impressive," concludes Buckingham. "Centric brings best practices and industry standards to the table that are helping us to make the most of our new product development team and the whole PLM setup within Shoes For Crews. As we step into the future, we know that Centric will continue to be a crucial part of our growth."



## ABOUT SHOES FOR CREWS

Shoes For Crews is the category creator and a leading designer and marketer of slip-resistant footwear worldwide. Headquartered in West Palm Beach, Florida, Shoes For Crews began producing slip-resistant footwear in 1984. Shoes For Crews strives to create a safer workplace in all industries where floor hazards are a reality. The high-performance culinary footwear brand MOZO and the work boot brand ACE are also part of the Shoes For Crews family of brands. The Shoes For Crews team's focus is to deliver the ultimate in slip resistant outsole technology and unmatched comfort with classic and fashion styling, through a complete line of footwear designed to bring each employee home safely at the end of the shift, whether they work in food service, hospitality, industrial, healthcare or other workplace environments. For more information on Shoes For Crews, visit [www.shoesforcrews.com](http://www.shoesforcrews.com).

## ABOUT CENTRIC

From its headquarters in Silicon Valley and offices in trend capitals around the world, Centric Software provides a Digital Transformation Platform for the most prestigious names in fashion, retail, footwear, luxury, outdoor and consumer goods. Centric Visual Innovation Platform (VIP) is a visual, fully digital collection of boards for touch-based devices like iPad, iPhone and large-scale, touch-screen televisions. Centric VIP transforms decision making and automates execution to truly collapse time to market and distance to trend. Centric's 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 SMB 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 in 2016 and Frost & Sullivan's Global Retail, Fashion, and Apparel PLM Product Differentiation Excellence Award in 2012. Red Herring named Centric to its Top 100 Global list in 2013, 2015 and 2016.



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