



## CASE STUDY

# COAST PRODUCTS

Founded in 1919, Coast Products is known for its durable lights, knives, and multi-tool products designed for real people with real needs. All items are manufactured to stand up to constant use in the most extreme work and recreation environments. Over time, Coast has streamlined its designs to meet functional requirements while simultaneously achieving a modern look and feel.

**Industry:**  
Consumer  
Packaged Goods

**Location:**  
Portland, OR

## Results



Increased accuracy  
and visibility



Improved inventory  
management



Real-time visibility  
to optimize resources



## Time for the Move from Manual to Digital

For over a century, Coast Products has been making lives easier and jobs safer, becoming a household name for many of its customers. Coast is known for its wide range of flashlights, safety gear, tools, and more. With the working professional in mind, Coast's products are created to withstand the test of time, each one backed by a lifetime warranty.

Coast was running all its purchasing through homegrown database tools and spreadsheets. This process was only updated once per month manually, so data was difficult to align with customer needs, the team's budget, and the business plan. Senior leadership knew lead times were suffering, as they needed to increase the frequency and accuracy with which sales and purchases were being reviewed. There was missed

opportunity in the inability to get product to customers when they wanted it, with little knowledge into which accounts were carrying what products. In addition, there was extra cost with constant unplanned buying and a general lack of visibility across the process. The team's evaluation process led to cloud-based Plex DemandCaster Supply Chain Planning as the right solution.

Shelley Roberts, Coast Products Supply Chain Manager, was brought in to help uplevel Coast's demand planning and get DemandCaster running with help from the Plex support team. With her supply chain planning background and years of expertise working with various systems, the Coast team was confident in their ability to successfully go live with Plex during the global pandemic.



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**Shelley Roberts**

Coast Products Supply Chain Manager

## Unboxing DemandCaster

With a remote implementation carried out during COVID-19, in-person training and live testing at the Coast site were shelved. However, this gave them a unique opportunity to own their implementation more fully to better determine which areas of business needed to be improved upon. The Plex team was easily accessible, making any changes and answering any questions that arose to ensure that business stayed on track. Despite the circumstances, Coast Products was live with Plex DemandCaster in just six months and has been seeing improvements ever since.

"Even with just the basics, it's 100% better than what we were working on before," said Roberts. "DemandCaster has got to be one of the easiest systems I've ever worked in as far as planning, so innovative and person-friendly." Since their go-live, Coast Products has added two team members with planning and purchasing backgrounds. Their transition to Plex DemandCaster was expedient, proving its ease of use and securing its standing as a solid foundational tool for those with and without planning backgrounds.

## Making a Difference

As a company, Coast believes that product should always be available for those who want it, and with Plex DemandCaster, this is now possible. With increased visibility, the team can better plan in advance, instead of operating in a reactive buying mode, now having 100% availability for all product to sell. DemandCaster proactively signals Coast team members daily, making sure that they know what to do to keep inventory available and continue making sales. “Gone are the constant conversations with customers about running out of product. It’s been a world of difference, night and day,” commented Roberts.

Coast now has access to insightful and actionable data with the help of DemandCaster. Employees access rolling forecasts, monitor inventory levels and safety stock, and review projections, sales data, and demand plans at any time. Both detailed reporting and roll-ups of SKUs give Coast the ability to adjust accordingly and in advance, better serving their customers. DemandCaster also connects planning and production, giving businesses like Coast Products the opportunity to step back and take the guesswork out of the data.



The increase in visibility to the broader organization has also been an empowering feature within DemandCaster, boosting cross-functional alignment and communication. Senior leadership has more confidence with a detailed view of the business, allowing them to strategize new ideas to take the business to the next level. The purchasing and sales teams have strengthened their relationships as a result of the DemandCaster implementation. The two departments now have regular conversations over the data to conduct account planning and make tweaks based on feedback that they are receiving, creating a strong partnership that did not exist previously.

Coast's more mature planning and forecasting capabilities are now helping differentiate their business and accelerate growth. Their increase in sales can be attributed in part to managing inventory more effectively as well as growing safety stock, which could not be done prior to DemandCaster. "I think DemandCaster has helped us to be a more fiscally responsible business," Roberts said.

**"There's a place that we can go to see how everything's rolling up, to see how a certain item is selling, to see how much inventory we have. None of that existed prior. DemandCaster has been a life saver."**

## ABOUT PLEX

Plex, by Rockwell Automation, is a leader in cloud-delivered smart manufacturing solutions, empowering the world's manufacturers to make awesome products. Our platform gives manufacturers the ability to connect, automate, track, and analyze every aspect of their business to drive transformation. The Plex Smart Manufacturing Platform™ includes solutions for manufacturing execution (MES),

ERP, quality, supply chain planning and management, asset performance management, production monitoring, process automation and analytics to connect people, systems, machines and supply chains, enabling them to lead with precision, efficiency and agility. To learn more, visit [www.plex.com](http://www.plex.com)