



From Spreadsheets to Cloud ERP

How Bee Valve Modernized Its Operations with Acumatica



A BLACK TIP LLC COMPANY



Bee Valve Inc. is a fluid handling manufacturer with a history of innovation that stretches back to the early days of the modern plastics industry. In the early 1970s, Bee Valve led the industry by developing non-metallic hose couplers and adapters made from glass-reinforced nylon and polypropylene, offering customers both economy and strength. Today its valves, couplers, adapters, strainers, and fittings move water for agricultural irrigation and many other applications.

In 2022, Jim and Hallie Stewart acquired Bee Valve along with its sister companies, forming Black Tip LLC. Alongside Bee Valve, the Black Tip family includes CableTek Wiring Products, Pioneer Products, and Plastic Enterprises, specializing in fluid handling components, cable management, and contract injection molding across two campuses.

The Stewarts loved the products and saw real potential, but the business they inherited ran on paper, spreadsheets, and a legacy Macola system that almost no one used. To build the company they envisioned, they needed more than new software. They needed new processes, a connected team, and a partner who could guide them. They found that partner in Algorithm, and the platform in Acumatica Cloud ERP.

"We saw a lot of potential. We really liked the products and believed in what the business could become."

Hallie Stewart, CEO, Black Tip LLC

A FRESH START

Before the Stewarts could modernize Bee Valve, they had to understand what they had taken on. Here is what they found:

A Personal Connection

Jim, a seasoned business owner, learned Bee Valve was for sale through a colleague whose father had supervised at the company for more than 40 years. Jim already knew the operation from repair work he had done after a roof collapse, which showed him both the company's strengths and its unrealized potential.

A Disconnected Workforce

About 85 percent of office staff and most production workers were temporary employees, and the previous owners took a hands-off approach. The four companies had operated as separate entities, and their employees rarely interacted, even under the same roof.

Everything on Paper

Filing cabinets filled the buildings. Product was trucked between facilities and handled again and again. Nothing was written down; the knowledge of how work got done lived in people's heads.

Spreadsheets Everywhere

Macola was used only for accounts receivable and payable, with no inventory or production tracking and no trained users. Each company kept its own spreadsheets, and shared vendors created duplicate records. No one could be sure which data was current.



BUILDING THE RIGHT TEAM

Friends and Family, All Hands on Deck

The Stewarts knew they could not rebuild a business alone. They turned to their network, bringing in trusted friends and family, including their high school and college-aged children. Two longtime friends took on key roles: Lisa, a retired social worker, stepped in to lead HR and ERP integration, and Sheri became CFO. Neither had prior ERP or manufacturing experience, and both have excelled.

Culture Before Software

Hallie worked with employees to define core values, celebrate achievements, and redefine roles around teamwork and open communication. Lisa spent a year simply helping people get to know one another, moved CableTek's team to the front of the building, and launched cross-training so employees could support whichever company needed help that day.

A Partner They Could Trust

Jim had lived through a failed ERP implementation at a previous business, so the Stewarts were cautious about who to trust. They chose Algorithm, which assigned Senior Consultant Andy Smith and consultant Kristin Christian to lead discovery. The team believes a larger vendor with a one-size-fits-all approach would not have known what to do with a business as unusual as theirs.

"They truly listened, understood what wasn't intuitive to us, and provided clear, confident guidance," says Hallie. "Their ability to simplify complex processes and push just enough without overwhelming us made all the difference. The discovery phase was eye-opening, not just for us, but for them, as they saw how tangled our old processes were."

"This core team, their leaders, were super strong, smart, and dedicated. They spent nights and weekends. They hadn't used an ERP system before, so they had to learn it and then figure out how to change the culture in the company to make it work."

Andy Smith, Senior Consultant, Algorithm

BUILDING FROM THE GROUND UP

Super Users as System Builders

As end-user training approached, a team member in accounts payable asked, "How are you going to teach me this in two weeks when you've been learning it for months?" It was a fair question. What she didn't realize was that the super users weren't just learning Acumatica; they were building it for everyone else. With no existing structure to copy, the core team defined workflows, decided what was needed and what wasn't, and shaped the system around the way the business really works.

Asking the Right Questions

"Andy and Kristin were masterful in guiding us through this process," says Lisa. "They didn't just tell us what to do, they asked the right questions. They'd challenge us: 'Is that really how you want this to work?' or 'Let's run through this scenario and see if it makes sense.' Sometimes we'd think we had the right setup, test it, and realize it wasn't right. Then we'd adjust and refine."

That back-and-forth, with expert guidance, ensured the system was built the right way, not just for go-live but for long-term success.

Clean Data Before Import

Rather than carrying old problems into a new system, the team restructured its master data around future needs. Working in Excel, they reviewed and consolidated records line by line, bringing together vendors and customers that had existed under multiple names across four companies. The result was a clean, well-organized import and one trusted source of truth.

Documentation as a Discipline

Where nothing had been written down, the team now maintains a process binder of 80 to 90 pages. It covers what people physically do on the floor and what they do in the system, from packing in Acumatica to shipping through StarShip. That discipline has let employees share responsibilities, collaborate more, and move into roles they prefer. It also speeds onboarding: a new sales manager with prior ERP experience was working independently after a two-hour session.

THE OUTCOME

One Platform for Four Companies

Acumatica now connects every company under Black Tip across both campuses. Inventory and production are tracked in a system for the first time, spreadsheets no longer compete for the truth, and the business runs on shared, reliable data. "If we didn't do the Acumatica, I don't even know how we would function now," Hallie says.

Visibility That Changes Expectations

With work in the system, it is also in the open. The team can now see what is being done and what isn't, and spot issues that were invisible before, such as a backlog of open quotes that surfaced once quoting moved into Acumatica. The shift has helped Black Tip operate with the rigor of a modern, growing business.

Employees with a Voice

Before the project, employees did much of the work but were rarely invited to ask questions or shape how things were done. As the implementation progressed, that changed. A few months in, team member Brandy said, "This is the most fun I've ever had at work." She was part of the team, solving problems and contributing rather than simply following instructions.

"Andy and Kristin played a huge role in that transformation," says Hallie. "They didn't just train our team, they engaged them, showing them the possibilities of what the system could do. I can't count how many times I sat there and had an 'Oh!' moment when Kristin or Andy demonstrated something new. People had always wanted to improve how they worked; they just needed the right tools and the right guidance to make it happen."

"Watching the team come together and do it, it was magical. There's no reason they had to. They could have just quit, but they all got into it."

Hallie Stewart, CEO, Black Tip LLC

4

companies on one
platform

2

campuses connected

80-90

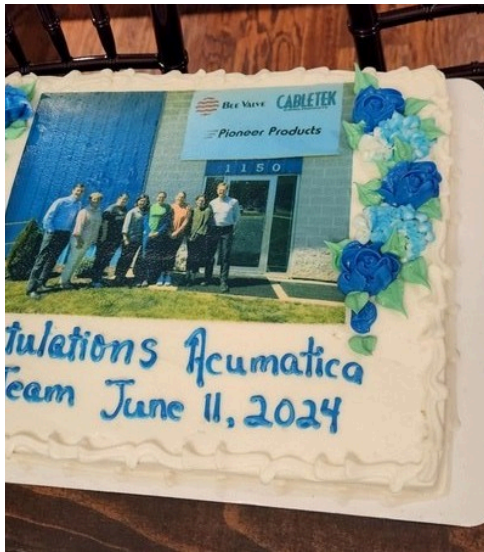
pages of documented
processes

1st

time inventory and
production were tracked
in a system

CELEBRATING GO-LIVE

Go-Live on June 11, 2024 wasn't just a technical milestone. It was a celebration of a year of hard work. The Stewarts, Lisa, and Sheri hosted a company-wide event with food trucks, cake, and creative awards recognizing everyone's contributions. Andy and Kristin were part of the day as well, receiving the "Steady Eddy" and "Save the Day" awards for their roles in the transformation.



The "Acumatica Dream Team" cake, Go-Live food trucks, and the awards presented to Algorithm's Andy Smith and Kristin Christian.

LOOKING AHEAD

Bee Valve's team isn't done. When a sales rep recently asked for a dashboard showing specific information, the super users called Algorithm and had it in place by the end of the week. Follow-up sessions with Andy and Kristin are helping the team learn what to monitor in the system as their use of Acumatica matures, and employees are already gearing up for the next Acumatica update.

"We have a strong desire to keep getting better," says Hallie, "and I think that makes our team unique."

ALGORITHM'S ROLE

Bee Valve's leaders credit Algorithm's team with making a first-ever ERP implementation feel achievable. Andy Smith brought steady, patient leadership through a demanding year, while Kristin Christian combined deep knowledge of Acumatica financials and manufacturing with a rare ability to teach. "Kristin is such a unicorn, with the accounting side and then the manufacturing side, and then being able to teach it," says Hallie. The team notes that no question ever felt like a bad one: problems simply got fixed, without ego.

When a third-party shipping integration stalled ahead of go-live, Algorithm escalated the issue on Bee Valve's behalf to keep the project moving. And since go-live, Algorithm has continued to support the team with new dashboards, optimization sessions, and guidance on getting more from the system.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

If you're thinking about moving to Acumatica or any other ERP, here are lessons from Bee Valve's journey:

- 1 Start with your people.** Technology works best when the team is connected. Define core values, break down silos, and cross-train so employees understand the whole business, not just their corner of it.
- 2 Let your super users build it.** The people closest to the work should shape the workflows. Choose a partner who challenges your assumptions and asks what you really need, and the system will fit how you actually work.
- 3 Clean your data before you move it.** Consolidate duplicate vendors and customers and restructure master data for the future. A clean import is the foundation for a single source of truth.
- 4 Write it down.** Document every key task, in the system and out of it. Process documentation makes training faster, jobs shareable, and growth sustainable.
- 5 Celebrate the milestones.** Recognizing the team's effort at go-live builds the momentum and ownership that keep improvement going long after the project ends.

THE THROUGH LINE

Bee Valve's journey from outdated processes to a cohesive, empowered team shows what's possible when visionary leadership, the right technology, and a culture of collaboration come together.



Algorithm stops at nothing to make their customers successful. In a time of self-help, they are accessible and always a phone call or email away, especially with flawless implementation methods, custom applications, process evaluation, upgrades, tools and add-ons, cloud services, customer support, network and IT support, and warehouse management.

To learn more, or even if you have a quick question, contact the Algorithm Solutions Team for a no-obligation, insightful, and immediate response.

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