



## ***For Interstate Batteries, the Inquiry Suite enables rapid real-time data validation and detailed analyses across over 4,000 business units and 80 companies***

“We use the Really Real Time® Inquiry Suite for all of the month-end reporting for our over 50 company-owned distributors as well as almost 100 independent distributors. I can pull the precise data I need online quickly without help from IT. In addition, I can drill down to the transaction level and see all the detail behind the journal entries.”

— Shannon Packer, Financial Consultant—  
Distributor Accounting, Interstate Batteries

### **About Interstate Batteries:**

- Interstate Battery System of America, Inc.® (IBSA), or Interstate Batteries, was founded in 1952 in Dallas, Texas, and is headquartered there today.
- Interstate Batteries is a leader in battery marketing and distribution, delivering Every Battery for Every Need™, including batteries for automotive, marine, motorcycles, snowmobiles, lawn mowers, watches, laptops, hearing aids, wheel-chairs, forklifts, cellular phones, and the spectrum of other recreational, household, specialty, and industrial uses.
- More than 300 wholesale distributors service Interstate Batteries' 200,000 retail dealers who provide batteries nearly anywhere in the U.S. and also in Canada and select international locations. The company's distributors also service the national account market and provide official replacement batteries for vehicle manufacturers worldwide.
- Through its Interstate All Battery Centers, Interstate Batteries provides more than 13,000 different types of batteries to consumers in retail environments.
- The company is growing rapidly, with the number of employees at Interstate Batteries headquarters quadrupling to over 1,300 since 1996.

### ***Business Challenge: Enabling detailed data analysis across a complex enterprise***

Since its founding in 1952, Interstate Battery System of America, Inc.® (IBSA), or Interstate Batteries has grown dramatically. Today the company has more than 300 wholesale distributors servicing the companies' 200,000 retail dealers across the U.S. and Canada as well as select international locations. In addition, the Inquiry Suite assists us with various levels of detail for over 50 Interstate All Battery Center retail locations nationwide that supply batteries for household and business needs.

This complex, growing company presented challenges for accounting efficiencies. For example, the Distributor Accounting Group, the Interstate Batteries home office, and the All Battery Centers were all using different accounting systems. Interstate Batteries selected JD Edwards EnterpriseOne™ ERP software to unify the company on one chart of accounts.

“We implemented JD Edwards first on the retail side to improve warehouse management by bringing warehouse, accounting, and billing into tighter alignment. When we moved forward with the phased implementation across other areas, the Distributor Accounting Group missed the ad-hoc reporting and analysis capabilities that their previous system provided,” says Melinda Zeppa, Software Development Manager—ERP, Interstate Batteries.

“There are about 50 Interstate-owned distributorships supported by this group, and when we needed to do analysis across all of them, EnterpriseOne did not provide an efficient way to summarize at a business unit or category level across multiple entities. We knew we would have the same issue when the home office tried to do company-wide optics with thousands of business units. We needed an easy way to summarize and analyze this data in a concise manner, and that's where The GL Company's Really Real Time® Inquiry Suite came in,” says Zeppa.



APPLICATIONS

The GL Company is a Certified Partner in the JD Edwards EnterpriseOne and JD Edwards World application-product focus areas.



**Solution:**

JD Edwards EnterpriseOne™ running on Oracle®

The Really Real Time® Inquiry Suite from The GL Company:

- General Ledger
- Fixed Assets has been purchased and is targeted for future implementation

**Benefits:**

- Enables rapid online access to real-time data for validation and to accelerate financial closings.
- Speeds up comparisons and data reconciliation across companies and business units.
- Provides ad-hoc reporting and data troubleshooting capabilities without IT assistance.
- Eliminates time-consuming manual processes.
- Accelerates process of supplying information to auditors.

“The Inquiry Suite stood out because of its real-time capabilities. Other options required transforming and loading data to another database, and the Inquiry Suite eliminates that requirement.” says Zeppa.

The All Battery Center business unit was selected for the initial implementation of EnterpriseOne and the Inquiry Suite in 2003 because this area was running a DOS-based accounting system that was not ready to handle the growth anticipated by Interstate Batteries. By 2005, the GL and AP solutions were live across the entire company. Interstate Batteries continues to add additional modules to its JD Edwards and Inquiry Suite systems to expand capabilities and benefits.

***Solution: The GL Company Inquiry Suite***

Interstate Batteries was looking for a way to enhance the reporting and inquiry capabilities of its EnterpriseOne software, specifically for comparing and analyzing data across multiple business units and companies. The Inquiry Suite was the ideal solution as it is based on the principles of Accounting Intelligence—a discipline that helps accountants accelerate the monthly close process and provides true real-time visibility of financial information to business users.

The installation of the Inquiry Suite was very fast and easy, according to Shirley Williams, Technical Architecture Manager—IT, Interstate Batteries. “We were surprised: with telephone support from The GL Company team, we were up and running in a couple of hours. It all went extremely well, and even with new releases and patches, it’s a very simple install,” says Williams.

Training was also rapid, says Nancy Demby, Director of Corporate Accounting, Interstate Batteries. “As the implementation phases proceeded, we did training based on operational accounting areas. The Inquiry Suite is very easy to use, very intuitive. Even new people have picked it up very quickly: with an hour or two of training, they could navigate around the software.”

The All Battery Center group saw immediate results from the training sessions. “We gave specific examples of reports we needed, and some core pieces of these were developed during the training,” says Mary Kincheloe, Retail Manager—All Battery Group, Interstate Batteries.

Williams praises the quality of The GL Company solution. “From an IT standpoint, the quality of the software has been good, and even though The GL Company support has been very responsive, we have not had to go to them often.”

***Benefits: Rapid ad-hoc reporting and data analysis***

In the past, manual reporting for the All Battery Centers was slow and had the inherent risk of error. “The Inquiry Suite has cut the time required to get at the specific information we want—it’s easily 25 percent faster now to get at the exact number and the amount of detail we need in the All Batteries Centers area,” says Kincheloe.

“The Inquiry Suite gives us a backup—like a double check—to rapidly validate any report that we run,” says Chris Baldovsky, Senior Financial Consultant—All Battery Group, Interstate Batteries. “I save at least eight hours of work each month with the Inquiry Suite between month-end reporting and ad hoc requests from VPs and Directors. There’s no printing and no re-keying, I just view the data online and pull the information I need in a matter of minutes,” he adds.

The real-time aspect of the Inquiry Suite has been particularly advantageous for data validation. "It's made things a lot easier. We use the Inquiry Suite not only to get optics into the information, but also for validation. For example, during closing, I can quickly write an inquiry to check that we have run a statement for everybody. And I can look at transactions that occur every month and easily analyze data based on business units, across all companies, across just one company, or any viewpoint that I need," says Demby.

Barry Doyle, Senior Systems Analyst—IT, Interstate Batteries, says that he relies on the Inquiry Suite when he is called upon to solve a problem. "When someone says they have an out of balance situation, for example, sometimes I can find the exact dollar amount using the Inquiry Suite without doing any other queries. The Inquiry Suite is a very handy tool: it's easy to use, easy to manipulate the columns, and I don't save a lot of inquiries because it's so easy to regenerate them."

"The category codes in JD Edwards are great, and we have put category codes on all of our business units. The Inquiry Suite exposes that functionality so that it's much easier to use the codes: we could not do that natively in JD Edwards because they were simply not as visible," Zeppa notes.

The Inquiry Suite facilitates a wide range of types of reports in addition to the specifically financial. "The Inquiry Suite makes it very simple to select by region or specific stores, depending on the audience for the report: our VP may want to see something more global or high level, while regional managers want to see data for their territories, and store managers for their stores," says Demby.

**The Really Real Time Inquiry Suite from The GL Company is a true-real time inquiry, consolidation and reporting system for JD Edwards World and EnterpriseOne. It's also the first product to meet all the criteria of Accounting Intelligence. It runs directly against the World and EnterpriseOne data and so avoids all the issues of accuracy, audit and security associated with replicating data into another system. The product handles extremely large volumes of data to distill high-level management information and delivers unsurpassed performance with full drill down to transactions.**

Inter-company eliminations are another good example of time savings. "Before the Inquiry Suite, it was about a two-day process to figure out where all the eliminations were and make them every month. We cut that to about a half-day process by writing a report in the Inquiry Suite of all the accounts with eliminations," says Packer.

Now that the Interstate Batteries teams have end-user tools, IT can concentrate on the published financial reports at the end of the month, according to Zeppa. "Without the Inquiry Suite, IT would have to do a whole lot more in terms of building reports, especially for ad hoc inquiries during closing and post-closing to answer executives' questions. I think some of the executives and regional managers get faster answers this way, and the online capabilities of the Inquiry Suite definitely provide quicker views into account activity. For the consolidated group, being able to view the transactions in real-time heads off a lot of phone calls and questions," says Zeppa.

### **The bottom line:**

For the accounting teams at Interstate Batteries, the Really Real Time Inquiry Suite speeds and simplifies detailed comparisons and analyses across multiple sets of financial data. For the first time, the teams have access to real-time ERP data for validation, reconciliation, and report and inquiry creation. The flexible Inquiry Suite has reduced some ongoing tasks from days to hours. And the IT team has more time to focus on core tasks now that accounting teams can create customized templates quickly and easily without assistance.

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