



CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

Preparing for the Handoff: How Johnson Brothers Is Moving 121 Years of Engineering Knowledge onto INNERGY Engineering

"Once we saw INNERGY Engineering, that just sealed the deal."

ZAC BODILY, PRESIDENT, JOHNSON BROTHERS

COMPANY	Johnson Brothers
IN BUSINESS	121 years
INTERVIEWED	Zac Bodily, President (27 years with the company, 5 as president), and Troy Taylor (24 years, shop floor through engineering)
PRODUCTS	INNERGY ERP, live. INNERGY Engineering, in implementation.

Executive Summary

Johnson Brothers has been in business for 121 years, and the engineer who has handled the bulk of its custom work is retiring after 43 of them. Decades of judgment that lived mostly in people's heads now needs somewhere to go.

President Zac Bodily first looked at INNERGY in 2014, after a conversation through the Architectural Woodwork Institute (AWI). Today the company runs INNERGY ERP, the bidding side of the business is noticeably faster, and INNERGY Engineering is roughly 95% configured with a September 1 go-live in sight.

Background: Two Careers Built on the Shop Floor

Neither of the men leading this change came to woodworking through a drafting table.

- **Zac Bodily, President.** Arrived at 19 with no woodworking background, looking for temporary work. Started as a shipping and receiving clerk, married the boss's daughter, and stayed. Twenty-seven years later he is president, having worked through most of the management functions along the way, title or no title.
- **Troy Taylor, Engineering.** Came off a farm to a cabinet shop at 18 and, by his own account, could not read a tape measure when he started. Joined Johnson Brothers in 2002 on the beam saw and has since worked the shop floor, project management, drafting, estimating, and engineering. Zac calls him the company's INNERGY user extraordinaire.

In the early days the office ran on long-hand notes, Excel spreadsheets, and Word documents. Troy is direct about the distance traveled: jobs move a lot faster and more efficiently than they used to.

The Challenge: Redundancy, and Knowledge That Only Lives with certain People

- **Institutional knowledge with no system behind it.** Long-tenured employees hold very specific, older ways of doing things that are hard to translate, hard to train, and hard to integrate across everyone else's work.
- **A 43-year retirement compressing the timeline.** The engineer leaving has handled the bulk of custom engineering for years.
- **Redundant engineering work landing on project managers.** The shop's existing setup forced the same information to be handled more than once, absorbing project manager time that belonged elsewhere.
- **An engineering software relationship that is not working.** Zac describes their existing engineering software company as not supportive, says they have been misled a number of times, and says the expense has not been worth it.
- **Planning and tracking gaps.** Zac had been looking for a better way to plan since well before INNERGY was on the table. What the company was doing worked, but it was leaving capability on the table.

"What we were doing was leaving a lot of things we could do behind. We just weren't going to move forward with what we're capable of unless you get the proper tools to do it."

ZAC BODILY, PRESIDENT, JOHNSON BROTHERS

The Solution: Why Johnson Brothers Chose INNERGY Engineering

The path to INNERGY started in 2014 with a phone call about something else entirely. Zac had reached out to AWI while implementing a different ERP system, trying to get tracking configured the way he wanted it. A peer in the association, who was AWI president around that time, told him the person he actually needed to talk to was Marc Sanderson, who had been involved in AWI's Cost of Doing Business Survey.

It took years to convert that introduction into a decision. The turning point was sending key individuals to an INNERGY summit.

"After about a half day, everybody was convinced and bought in, and said, absolutely, this is what we need."

ZAC BODILY, PRESIDENT, JOHNSON BROTHERS

INNERGY Engineering closed the argument. Johnson Brothers had been struggling with their existing engineering software, and what they saw in Engineering addressed the specific redundancy that had been costing them.

- **It removed redundancy rather than automating it.** The duplicated handling that had built up in their workflow could be designed out instead of worked around.
- **The people behind it were known quantities.** Zac points to a trust factor: knowing who was building it, and what they intended to do with it.

- **Responsiveness before the sale, not just after.** Questions, needs, and concerns were answered quickly enough that Zac felt confident the product would get where it needed to go.
- **One vendor, one vocabulary.** Running ERP and Engineering from the same platform meant products and nomenclature could be defined once and carried straight through.

“If you’ve got people with the knowledge and responsiveness like that, then you’re pretty confident you can get to something that’ll work really well.”

ZAC BODILY, PRESIDENT, JOHNSON BROTHERS

The Implementation: Configure Once, Carry It Through

Troy Taylor has worked in four different engineering systems over his career. This is the one he describes as the easiest to implement.

Key strategies:

- **Implement ERP and Engineering together.** Troy set up the products and nomenclature he wanted on the ERP side and followed the same structure straight into Engineering. He credits this for how smoothly the transition has gone. Asked what has helped most overall, though, he points somewhere else: the INNERGY staff available to him when he hits a hard spot.
- **Use the weekly cadence.** Troy meets weekly with his INNERGY contact, so questions and issues get handled as they come up rather than accumulating.
- **Send the next generation to class.** A project manager, since hired to replace the retiring engineer, has been taking the weekly INNERGY Engineering classroom trainings and bringing questions back into the shop.
- **Add capacity where the gap is.** Johnson Brothers brought in outsourced drafting help over the past year to cover the engineering workload during the transition.
- **Set a date and commit to it.** Roughly 95% configured, with a handful of small pieces outstanding and a September 1 target to go fully live.

“It has been a very smooth transition for me. It’s been a phenomenal experience.”

TROY TAYLOR, JOHNSON BROTHERS

Early Results: What Johnson Brothers Is Already Seeing

- **A faster bidding operation.** Troy describes the company as extremely efficient on the bidding side today, and credits INNERGY for it.
- **Support that responds almost instantly.** Troy describes responses as nearly instantaneous and says that is not what you get from other software companies.
- **Bugs closed in a week or two.** Troy’s estimate for how long most reported issues take to resolve.
- **An on-site event that changed the product.** The INNERGY team traveled to Johnson Brothers for what INNERGY calls a Kaizen event, listened to what the shop needed, recognized those needs were industry-wide, and shipped the changes.

- **Training that is reaching beyond one person.** A project manager has been taking the weekly classroom sessions and bringing questions back to Troy, building familiarity ahead of go-live.

"It's almost instantaneous when I get a response back, and you just don't get that with other software companies."

TROY TAYLOR, JOHNSON BROTHERS

Managing the Change: Leading a 121-Year-Old Team Into a New System

Zac is clear that technology was never the hard part. Everyone at Johnson Brothers agrees the product is good and that it will help. The real work has been bringing along a team where many people have spent entire careers doing things a particular way and doing that with respect for everything those ways built.

When the team sits down together and looks at the system, Zac says, it is all oohs and ahhs. Everyone can see where it goes. Getting there asks people who are already busy taking on something new, and Zac treats that as a leadership question rather than a software one.

Troy set the example. He jumped in, saw the benefit, and put in time to get there, and he is now the person the rest of the company learns from.

The most encouraging signal is generational. The project manager hired to take over the custom engineering work has been taking the weekly classroom sessions and wants a solid foundation to build a career on. Zac finds it fun to watch: a company 121 years in, deciding how it wants to work for the next stretch, with someone eager to carry it.

The Impact Ahead

What the company expects to gain:

- **Project managers doing project management.** The redundant engineering work currently absorbed by PMs comes off their plates, freeing them for the work only they can do.
- **Efficiency from start to finish.** Troy expects the gains already visible in bidding to carry through into production.
- **A knowledge handoff that survives the retirement.** Structure and nomenclature held in the system rather than in one person's memory.
- **Efficiency, profitability, and growth.** Asked directly whether Engineering would move all three, Zac answered without hedging: 100%.

What the company has planned for:

- **A short adjustment period.** Troy expects the first few weeks to take focus before the benefit compounds, and the team has planned around it.
- **A deliberate pace on adoption.** Zac knows people come along at different speeds, and are prepared to keep momentum through the transition.

Looking Ahead: What Happens Next at Johnson Brothers

- **Go live September 1.** Fully into Engineering, with the last configuration pieces closed out beforehand.

- **Complete the engineering handoff.** The incoming project manager takes over the custom engineering work as the 43-year veteran retires.
- **Extend the nomenclature discipline.** Keep ERP and Engineering structures aligned as the product library grows.
- **Keep sharing what they learn.** Johnson Brothers has been open with feedback since day one, and that continues to shape the product for every shop that follows.

Conclusion

Johnson Brothers is not yet a results story, and we are not going to present it as one. What it is, at 121 years old, is a company doing something difficult: replacing decades of undocumented practice with a system, while the people who hold that practice are still there to hand it over.

Zac spent a decade waiting for the right moment and the right buy-in. Troy has spent the last stretch configuring the system that will hold it.

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