



## CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

# Creative Foam Exceeds Annual Sales Goal by 44% After Implementing SugarCRM



In the small town of Fenton, Michigan, a manufacturing company was born in 1969. Over 54 years, [Creative Foam](#) grew into an industry powerhouse, with twelve facilities located across the United States and Mexico. In the same period, it built a solid reputation among the biggest tiers and OEMs in the automotive industry. The company serves all major car brands in the automotive space both domestic and international. Their secret lies in a culture that lives and breathes the company's core values, captured in a few words: Be Inclusive, Be Responsible, Be Inventive, and Be Relentless.

**Industry** ///


Manufacturing

**Location** ///

US, Mexico

**Website** ///

[creativefoam.com](http://creativefoam.com)



Automotive is not the only vertical Creative Foam serves. It also has a healthcare division that accounts for 20% of its business, offering innovative customized manufacturing solutions that enhance patient care and comfort, increase recovery time, and offer safety and protection.

But after sustained growth in its main vertical, Creative Foam now faces a tougher market – one where cost, strategy, and pricing are primary drivers. The big GM strike in late 2019 was the first in a string of challenges that included the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing production halt, supply chain disruptions, and soaring material costs. At the same time, the transition toward electric vehicles was gaining momentum, creating a new challenge for the company as the market shifts. As a company identity rooted in inventiveness, Creative Foam wanted to stay ahead of the curve.

## Getting More Accurate, Granular Data

Until as recently as February 2022, Creative Foam relied on Microsoft Excel for customer data analysis and consolidation. Even though the company started with a master file, with 11 account managers working on different quotations, each person relied heavily on their own spreadsheet. Files often came with different formatting, which made data consolidation time-consuming.

Using Excel not only resulted in data input, version control, and missing information issues, but also posed challenges in data accuracy, consistency, and history. This impacted the way the team projected their sales. “We didn’t have a great structure for measuring and monitoring pipeline in real-time and needed a new way to enhance the tracking of advanced KPIs and push our business forward,” says Douglas Shinkle, VP of Sales at Creative Foam.

The company looked for a suitable CRM solution to move away from Excel sheets and laborious data management. They wanted greater visibility to understand their business better and with more granularity, such as win rates on specific products with different customers. “We wondered, ‘What tool can we use to make us better as an organization and understand more about our sales process?’,” says James McAlister, Marketing and Sales Analytics Manager at Creative Foam. And pretty soon, Creative Foam found exactly what they were looking for.

## Transforming Sales with Data

After considering many different solutions, the Creative Foam team settled on SugarCRM’s sales automation platform, [Sugar Sell](#). “Some of the other well-known vendors offered much more than we needed. What struck us from the start was how tailored Sugar’s approach was. We could tell they really listened to our needs and understood us as a business. And it was fully customizable,” shares James.

Creative Foam did a soft 5-month rollout of Sugar before the new fiscal year. During this period, the sales team gained familiarity with the platform and defined the metrics it would track. Quoting, activity, and wins were required to go through the CRM for tracking to sales goals for the fiscal year. “We liked the functionality of ‘work where you are’ within the system,” shares James.

**“Sugar came with a solution tailored to our specific needs.”**

**– JAMES M.,**  
Marketing and Sales Analytics  
Manager, Creative Foam

With Sugar, Creative Foam's sales team transformed their process and how they handled customer data. "Anything that we're quoting, any opportunity we have is going into the CRM," James emphasizes. As a result, the Creative Foam team now boasts 100% adoption of the Sugar platform.

This process has led to greater accountability and enabled better internal communication for the team. Since the data is both on the ERP and Sugar, other departments like product development can see what they need to do to help the company succeed. "Now, we can look at real data and quantify what we mean. We can put it in terms of dollars, opportunities, and time. We're dealing in facts. This has been critical as a communication tool for us because it easily fits into our process," James says.

## Building Internal and External Credibility

With a proper historical view, the team can now track, analyze trends, and speak with data when making decisions on how to position materials and tailor approaches to customers. "We can see the things that we're currently selling," James says. "For die cuts and molded parts that make up a significant part of our sales, we can now answer questions like 'Are we seeing the same amount of activity for a specific customer? Are we quoting the same mix of products we currently ship or has there been a shift?'," he adds.


The data now not only enhances reporting for what's happening in the business but also provides actionable insights to guide the next steps for the teams. And James has happily bid farewell to hours lost by manual data consolidation in spreadsheets. "It's made my life so much easier. It certainly has saved me a lot of time and helps me answer questions quickly," he says.

For Douglas, having all that data on hand has helped in building strategies based on advanced metrics and KPIs to deliver results. "I can confidently speak to the makeup of our wins and identify whether they are OEM or tier suppliers, EV or internal combustion engines, pickup trucks, or cars. The ability to continually assess our market position is impressive," he explains.

## Gaining Insight into Positioning

By running all its data through Sugar, Creative Foam gained insight into its place in a changing market. "As our market shifts to EV, we wanted to understand the implications for us and what it meant for our business," explains James. "We had a good feeling about where we were positioned but needed the ability to quantify it with data. Since implementing Sugar, we've seen that we have almost no drop in dollar content from EV to internal combustion and in some cases, we have a higher dollar content." The data revealed that Creative Foam's pipeline now comprises 55% internal combustion engines and 45% EV—a near-equal distribution. This places the company in a promising position for an electric future.

Since implementing Sugar, the company has observed a significant rise in the monetary value per vehicle by 14%. Furthermore, Creative Foam has seen remarkable enhancements in its total and controlled hit rates, improving by 13% and 9% respectively year over year. Additionally, the company experienced a remarkable 42% growth in its pipeline in its inaugural fiscal year using Sugar. In the same timeframe, the tier business expanded by over 40%, providing valuable insights into the company's market positioning and progression. James attributes much of this success to the heightened focus and visibility that Creative Foam has achieved through Sugar.



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— **DOUGLAS S.**, VP of Sales, Creative Foam



## Revving up for Future Growth

After such success, Creative Foam maintains its relentless drive to be inventive, never stop learning, and strive towards sustained excellence through quality products. “Sugar has been a key driver to our growth,” Douglas affirms. “Adoption of new technology is always a huge challenge. So, seeing my team respond positively and be successful with it is fantastic. They use it to drive their business every day.”

James also has only good things to say about the entire implementation. “Our experience with support and our CSM has been great,” James shares. “Any question we have is answered and the team responds quickly to implement new ideas and maximize our value.” The Creative Foam team sees the road ahead with crystal-clear clarity. “We’ve seen so much success since implementation and look forward to continuing to build on that momentum utilizing our advanced data to drive us forward,” he adds.

**“I would absolutely recommend Sugar because it’s simple and customizable. It is a good fit, and it was the right decision.”**

– **JAMES M.,**  
Marketing and Sales Analytics  
Manager, Creative Foam.

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## About SugarCRM

SugarCRM helps sales teams reach their highest potential. Companies choose SugarCRM to cut through complexity, prioritize opportunities, and increase upsell using the resources they already have. SugarCRM is ideal for complex, relationship-driven industries – such as manufacturing, wholesale and distribution – looking to accelerate growth and drive smarter decision-making.

Learn more at [www.sugarcrm.com](http://www.sugarcrm.com)