

WHITE PAPER

Ernest to the Rescue:

*Coast Aluminum National
visibility meets local insight*



**Ernest
To The
Rescue**



Coast Aluminum makes high quality aluminum products for construction, manufacturing, and architectural projects of all shapes and sizes.

With branches throughout the Western United States as well as multiple manufacturing facilities in Baja, Mexico, Coast supplies nationwide builders with custom and pre-made products.

Keeping up with the demands of a national supply chain calls for optimization at both the corporate and local levels. Coast was looking for a better way to achieve high level savings and efficiencies in packaging, while also allowing each location to meet their own unique needs. That's when Ernest came to the rescue.

From San Francisco to Sonora

Founded in Hayward, California in 1982, Coast Aluminum specializes in all types of aluminum and stainless-steel products for construction needs, from country music star Carrie Underwood's epic stage production to Frank Gehry's architectural masterpiece, the Disney Music Hall in Los Angeles. They also excel at creating unique architectural structures like art-inspired staircases and eye-catching building exteriors. With branches in California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, and Arizona, they serve customers across the US.

Vital velocity: keep inventory moving

When you're dealing in high dollar construction materials, turning over inventory quickly is essential to driving solid returns. Each Coast location has different needs, so it's important that they manage their own supply chains to ensure they can meet customer demand without slowing operations.

But shipping giant pieces of aluminum around the country requires a lot of materials, including large scale items with long lead times. Striking a balance between being able to fulfill orders in a timely manner and controlling costs was creating challenges for Coast at both the local and national levels. When shipping materials were running low, warehouse managers were at the mercy of their local suppliers. Long lead times on some of the larger materials and minimum order requirements could wreak havoc on shipping efficiency.

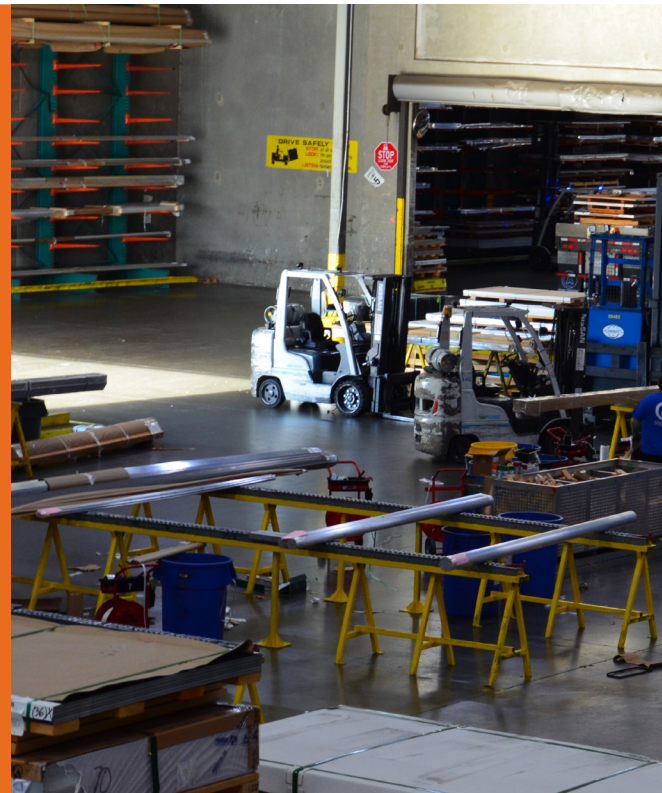
Coast needed a partner that could supply all of their locations, centralizing control and visibility, while leveraging the national volume to drive savings. Ernest Packaging Solutions had the answer.

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Our partnership with Ernest makes our corporate operation more efficient and gives each location the hands-on support that helps them service our projects smarter.

Tom Clark

Owner
Coast Aluminum



National footprint, personal touch

First, Ernest and Coast sat down to review overall operations and uncover opportunities for improvement. Coast's Corporate Operations Manager, Julio Marrero, explained where Coast was doing well and their challenges—including siloed inventory management. The biggest problems were on-time delivery and product availability. Their previous supplier was running out of some products and over-stocking others. And the manufacturer's lead times sometimes slowed things down, impacting the fast turns they rely on.

"Before we started working with Ernest, getting the supplies we needed when we needed them was a problem," explains Mike Bloemhof, Coast's warehouse manager. "Sometimes they sent the product to one location and we had to transport it to another location on our own trucks, which cost us time and money. But Ernest has locations near all of our branches, which means they can serve each facility directly."

Ernest put together a list of 20 core items and created a national program that they were able to roll out to all 10 Coast locations at the same time. With feet on the ground in every region, Ernest was also able to deliver a personal touch to help each branch maintain optimal inventory levels—while empowering the corporate office to oversee the supply chain.



The power of just-in-time

Ernest Head of National Accounts Brian Theodore works with Coast's leadership to oversee the entire operation, while each Coast location has a local Ernest client relations manager to address their unique needs. The Ernest reps also act as an interface between Coast's local managers and the corporate team, which helps drive compliance and gives the branches a voice. This collaborative approach gives the executive team better visibility and helps Coast maintain better control.

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Ernest makes us feel like we're family. They work closely with each location and are always looking for ways to improve, with constant communication about new supplies and alternatives.

Julio Marrero

Corporate Operations Manager
Coast Aluminum

Ernest also implemented just-in-time inventory management for Coast. Each Coast location keeps a two-week packaging material supply on hand, and places restocking orders through Ernest's online portal as needed. Ernest keeps a 90-day supply of Coast's core items ready whenever they need them. This frees up valuable floor space, and improves cash flow because Coast doesn't have to meet minimum order requirements, especially on the bigger products. Best of all, Ernest delivers the next day enabling every Coast branch to turn orders around quickly.





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With other companies, you don't see who you're buying from. But with Ernest, it's personal. They give 110% to make sure you're doing things cost effectively. That one-to-one relationship makes a big difference.

Mike Bloemhof

Warehouse Manager
Coast Aluminum

Strong partnership in Phoenix

Phoenix is an outstanding example of the seamless transition company-wide. The Coast team in Phoenix provided Ernest with a projection of what they would need, when, and Ernest made sure they were ready to restock on schedule.

Personalized, local service has been a powerful benefit for the Phoenix team. Kyle Osmundson, operations manager noted, “We almost never saw the reps from our previous supplier. The Ernest folks are in here regularly, checking to make sure we have what we need. And if we need a restock, they always make sure we get it the next day.” Coast's previous suppliers would often claim to have a product in stock, then tell them it would take 7-10 days when they placed an order. This lack of transparency, and lag in delivery, made it difficult for Coast to hit their own deliveries. Ernest's processes make everything easy and keeps things on schedule.

Putting safety first in Los Angeles

As the corporate headquarters, Los Angeles is the center of Coast's operations. With safety always top of mind, one of the first things Ernest did for Coast Los Angeles was to improve a key packing process, making it both safer and faster.

Coast has to cut single-face corrugated, which comes in giant rolls, to fit custom window-blinds for one of its accounts. Coast employees were using a blade to cut the rolls, with no dispenser. The whole process was tricky and employees had to bend over, which has hard on their backs. Ernest designed a dispenser that lifts the corrugate off the ground, preventing back injury and making it easier to cut off pieces as needed. By mounting it on casters, Ernest made it possible to roll it around to different workstations on demand.



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The savings we've gained with Ernest allows our business to be more profitable, have funds for the equipment we need, and to work more efficiently.

Julio Marrero

Corporate Operations Manager
Coast Aluminum

Looking ahead and moving forward

At a corporate level, the partnership with Ernest has given Coast total visibility into its nationwide supply chain, and helped them gain control over inventory, turn times, and costs. At a granular level, each location is able to get what they need, when they need it.

Coast was so pleased with the Ernest partnership that they decided to switch their janitorial and sanitation supplies to Ernest, too. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, they even ordered masks and toilet paper from Ernest to ensure employees had enough supplies at work and at home.

Coast plans to take advantage of Ernest's process design optimization service in the near future, where Ernest Design Specialists will look at every aspect of the operation and finds ways to streamline, simplify, and save. It's a collaboration that makes things better at every level.

To find out how Ernest can help your business drive savings and efficiency both locally and nationally, contact us today.

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