

# customer success story

## PERENNIALS

### about perennials

The Perennials and Sutherland group of companies are acknowledged leaders in the international design industry.

The company excels at collaborating with leading designers to produce the finest luxury furniture, fabrics and accessories. David Sutherland Showrooms are exclusive to the trade and represent the finest in home furnishings, fabrics and accessories, along with the company's signature Perennials and Sutherland brands. Sutherland and Perennials Studios present a showcase collection of the very latest from the Perennials and Sutherland collections..

P E R E N N I A L S®  
LUXURY PERFORMANCE FABRICS AND RUGS

**Industry:** Fabrics manufacturing

**Headquarters:** Mobile, AL, United States, Alabama

**Website:** <https://www.perennialsandsutherland.com/>

## scaling complex customization—an ancient tradition gets a modern assist

**Real-time production visibility generates efficiencies and strengthens the ability to delight customers.**

**Can a business built on handcrafted, custom products made with ancient production techniques scale in the modern world?**

Perennials, a growing business steeped simultaneously in luxury, state-of-the-art custom fabrics, and ancient traditions, proves that by adopting the right business process management solution, even highly customized product offerings utilizing traditional craftsmanship are scalable.

As a leader in the luxury performance textile industry, Perennials offers more than 900 hand-woven custom fabrics to the most preeminent design houses and high-end global retailers.

While the story of high-performance, artisan fabrics developed for luxury indoor and outdoor applications is interesting, their India-based hand-crafted rug production operation is particularly fascinating.

Perennials' previous technology stack challenged their operations and production planning teams in that it was not possible to track rugs as discrete entities throughout the production and shipping processes. This lack of unit-level visibility introduced inefficiencies and made customer communications more time-consuming due to manufacturing complexities and ranging production timelines.

Detailed mid-production unit-level tracking is not a requirement for most manufacturers. However, each Perennials rug is born of complex, handcrafted processes completed by teams of artisans under the direction of master weavers leveraging generations' old traditions. The creation of each rug is quite long compared to typical modern product manufacturing timelines requiring production progress visibility that enables just-in-time, accurate communications to maximize customer satisfaction and optimize efficiencies.

# A 5,000-year-old Industry Operating in the Digital Age

While the precise origin date is unknown, hand-woven carpets were first crafted in the Middle East beginning around 3,000 B.C. However, the rug weaving tradition was brought to India in 1520 A.D. by Great Mughal Akbar, whose family had spent many years in Persia with well-established carpet-making traditions. He brought a core group of master rug weavers to India founding a thriving industry that remains very much intact, and in many ways unchanged, today.

Just as today, custom, luxury rugs were crafted using the finest materials for the specific tastes of a wealthy, primarily royal, clientele. Throughout the

reign of Akbar and his successors, Indian rugs represented top-notch artistry. Each rug was intricately made with precisely 4224 knots per square inch, and it sometimes took 15 years or more to complete a complex design.

A Perennials rug certainly does not take 15 years to manufacture, but the required care and craftsmanship result in production cycles much longer than is typical for 21st-century products. Maintaining age-old care, artistry, and quality, while meeting the demands of today's fast-paced world has been one of the keys to the success of Perennials' custom rug business.

## Perennials—A Uniquely Complex Business

The vision, talent, and dedication it took to establish Perennials as a go-to supplier for many of the world's leading design houses cannot be overstated. Additionally, operations and production planning enabling the scaling of their rug business, consisting of 90 percent custom orders, have been remarkable.

So, where do the complexities in Perennials' rug manufacturing business lie?

Points of rug customization include size, shape, design, and colors. On the surface, these customization points seem pretty obvious and perhaps not all that unique or challenging. However, when we look at solely the issue of color complexity, the story becomes much more interesting.

Perennials' luxury performance rugs are made using Perennials' solution-dyed acrylic yarn. Each yarn consists of four strands that come in forty-five colors, and these forty-five colors are combined in four-strand configurations offering a nearly infinite color pallet.

In addition to the nearly infinite color combinations, many of their rugs feature custom designs, sizes, and shapes. An added area of complexity is dynamic production timeframes.

Orders often contain rugs of varying sizes, from small entryway rugs to large rugs designed for sitting rooms or other grand areas. Because each rug is handmade, the bigger the rug, the longer it takes to weave. Additionally, just like virtually every other industry, Perennials has experienced supply chain challenges that have, at times, delayed manufacturing for reasons outside of their control.

While rug weaving is a virtually unchanged centuries-old tradition, rug design and engineering have modernized. Each rug has design and color map layouts and other specs that designers can adjust pre-production.



# Product-level visibility was a key to scaling operations

Salesforce is Perennials' database of record. Their challenges were rooted in an inability to track rugs as individual entities throughout their manufacturing processes given varying unit production timeframes.

While they explored a few different solutions to address this lack of unit-level visibility, Perennials ultimately discovered Work-Relay, a native Salesforce solution designed to do precisely what they were striving to do. Specifically, Work-Relay manages interdependent processes and business operations while assigning processes, and hence, end-to-end visibility, to individual rug manufacturing.

**"We implemented Work-Relay in November 2020,"** shared Kevin Simpkins, MBA, CSCP, Sr. Manager Operations Demand Planning, Perennials. **"Before adopting Work-Relay, we managed order data through fields we added to our ERP system. However, there was no efficient way to track individual rugs throughout the process; we could only track orders."**



Because outstanding customer service is a priority, and different rugs have different production timeframes, partial orders are shipped to deliver as much product to the customer as quickly as possible.

The lack of individual rug visibility made partial order shipments challenging to manage as a partially shipped order could not be closed. Additionally, it was not efficient to give a customer or a member of the sales team real-time updates on the status of the individual rugs within an order.



**"We also did not have a way to manage team chatter in a manner that could attach these communications to the production of a specific rug. There was a lot of emailing, calling, and instant messaging with our teams in India to generate needed status updates. These communications methods were inefficient and were not attached to a specific rug as it moved through its production journey,"** Simpkins continued.

# Managing Additional Product Level Complexity

In addition to the manufacturing process for each custom rug, there are a few additional sources of complexity requiring management, specifically, the strike offs, direct customer shipments, and add-on products needed for nearly every order.

It is standard practice to provide the customer an 18" X 18" sample, known to the rug and textile industries as a strike off, for approval before beginning the rug production process. Strike offs typically take about four weeks to produce, rather than the months a large rug often requires and are an integral part of the custom rug business.

**"Work-Relay allows us to manage the production and shipment of each strike off and then seamlessly associate that specific strike off to the specific production unit. Since the adoption of Work-Relay, this entire process is simply much smoother,"** explained Simpkins.

Additionally, Perennials' largest customers are design houses located around the world. Sometimes, rugs need to be shipped directly to a customer, and sometimes rugs within the same order might need to be shipped to two different locations. Work-Relay's ability to manage each rug at the unit level enables more efficient shipping management.

Finally, add-ons like rug pads are commonly ordered. Each rug pad is designed for and needs to be associated with a specific rug, and again, Work-Relay enables this simple yet essential association.

## Just-in-Time Order Tracking Differentiates Perennials in the Luxury Design Market

"Bartone Interiors' passion is carefully curating spaces that share our clients' unique stories. A custom Perennials rug is often just the centerpiece we need to bring our vision for a given space to life fully.

Our clients greatly appreciate the creativity and extensive skill set we bring to their projects. Still, they have high expectations and have a low threshold for poor communications and missed deadlines.

Perennials' ability to track each rug in our orders and give us just-in-time information relating to progress or any unavoidable delays goes a very long way toward helping our projects run smoothly and delighting our clients."

-Kristin Bartone, Creative Director and Principal, Bartone Interiors



# Continual Customer Service Improvement Enhances Market Differentiation

While the rug and textiles industry widely respects Perennials as a materials and design innovator, they are also well regarded for their commitment to customer service. For example, they pride themselves on helping leading design houses, like LA Design Concepts attain and maintain 4.9/5.0 ratings.

**“Our design house customers are incredibly good at what they do, and they service a very discerning clientele,”** commented Emily Ramsey, Director of Sales Operations, Perennials.

“We’ve always been very dedicated to communicating with our customers to establish proper expectations, even when we have to relay news of order delays or other challenges.

Since the implementation of Work-Relay, we can deliver these updates much faster. Our clients value access to this real-time information because they can better communicate with their clients. This access to quick and accurate information for each rug ordered has helped to differentiate us in the market further.”



## Reporting Efficiency and Maximizing Internal Resources

Before implementing Work-Relay, the Perennials operations and production planning teams received status reports only once per week, so reporting or status communications between reports were additional work for the team.

“To achieve the level of reporting and visibility Work-Relay facilitates, I would need to hire an additional person to our team, a personnel expenditure that would cost us quite a bit of money,” shared Simpkins. **“With Work-Relay, we can access real-time information any time and schedule report delivery as frequently as needed.”**

The added operational visibility has also provided insights that lead to internal optimization and the ability to be proactive. Simpkins continued, “It’s now easier to see the length of time required for everything we do and the challenges likely to cause delays. This has allowed us to identify areas to improve efficiency, work toward optimization goals, and reduce problems or delays. **We are better positioned to communicate with customers when a rug will be delayed.”**

# Scaling a Handcrafted, Custom Rug Business

There is no shortage of demand for high-end, handcrafted, one-of-a-kind rugs that marry the best modern materials and luxurious yarn with artesian rug weaving traditions from the 16th century. But how can a business like this grow?

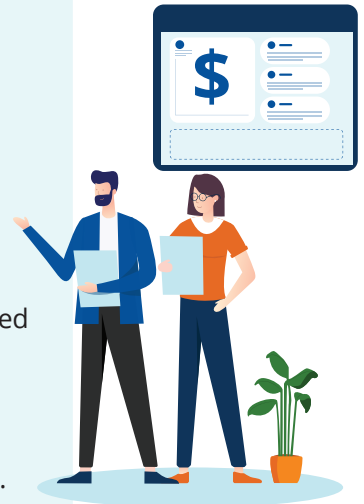
"Automating customization is a trend within many markets and, by implementing the correct assortment of technology solutions, this is possible for many businesses," Simpkins commented.

**"The production of our handcrafted rugs can never and will never be automated; however, we can and are automating the processes that support the work of our master weavers and their teams. Automating these supporting processes with Work-Relay allows us to rapidly grow a business that would seem impossible to scale at first glance."**

## Work-Relay - Enterprise Work Automation for Salesforce Clouds

Work-Relay seamlessly overlays your Salesforce implementation, simplifying the design, management, and optimization of complex operational work to maximize worker productivity, increase company-wide visibility, and enable business agility.

Work-Relay will help you systemize and scale complex business operations, provide unrivaled flexibility to solve any business operations problem and build an enterprise standard for solution delivery. Work-Relay clients include large enterprises as well as small and mid-size companies across multiple industries. Typical use cases include installing fiber optics, managing clinical trials, coordinating custom manufacturing, and managing product design.



## IMPROVING YOUR BUSINESS

- • • • Neostella is a global automation consulting, implementation and custom development firm.
- • • • We take a customer-centric approach with our automation services and will work closely with your team to identify opportunities for better efficiency, to refine your processes, and to create
- • • • unique solutions designed to meet your business needs. With office locations in North
- • • • America, South America, Europe and Asia, our global team offers ongoing 24/7 support,
- • • • ensuring long-term success after you go live.