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CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

Forging Ahead: How Copalcor Modernised Decades of Manufacturing Excellence with iPlan ERP

copalcor

iPlan ERP powered by Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central.

Client	**Copalcor**
Industry	Non-ferrous metal manufacturing: copper, brass, and alloy semi-finished products and turnkey busbar systems
Location	Wadeville, Germiston, Gauteng, South Africa
Solution	**iPlan ERP** powered by Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central
Implementation Partner	iPlan
Go-live	Copalcor Trading: April 2025 • Copalcor Manufacturing: June 2025

www.iplan.global | info@iplan.global | +27 87 702 6369

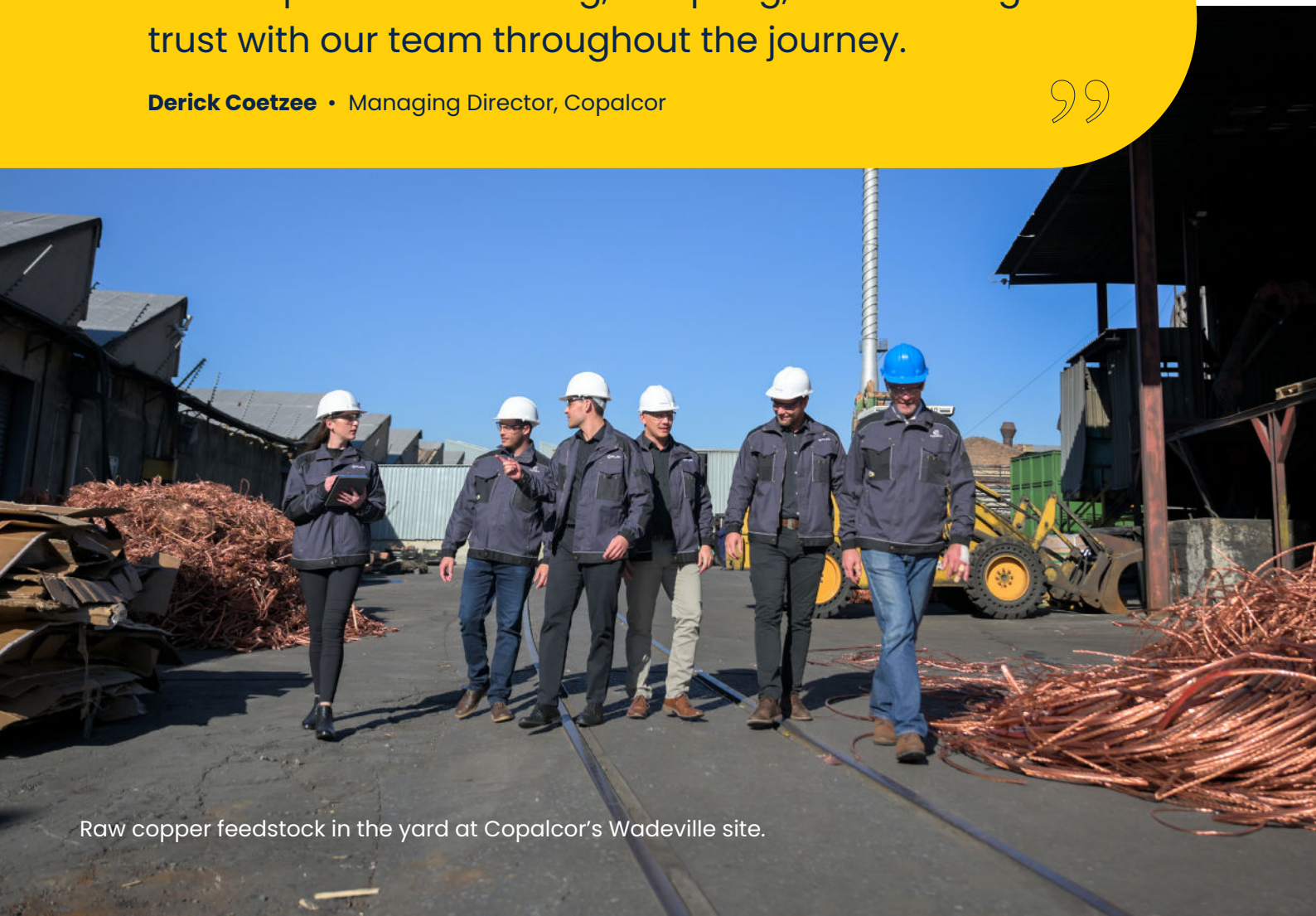
ABOUT COPALCOR

Copalcor is South Africa's largest producer of copper, brass, and alloy-based semi-finished products and turnkey busbar systems. Founded in the Johannesburg area in 1948, and known over the years as McKechnie Brothers, Brass Extruders (BESA), and Copalcor Rolled Metals before becoming the Copalcor Group, the company operates through two main divisions.

Copalcor Manufacturing runs from a 54,000 m² company-owned plant in Wadeville, Germiston, housing a rolling mill, rod production, and a separately operated forgings division, serving both local and international markets. Copalcor Trading stocks and supplies products regionally through central distribution and five trading branches, sourcing from the manufacturing plant, other branches, imports, and vendors, with frequent intercompany trading across the group.

The group also includes a Projects division at the main plant, operating independently with its own procurement, inventory, manufacturing, and sales, and an Earthing division, part of Copalcor Trading, which manufactures earthing and lightning protection products such as earth rods, conductors, and clamps. Copalcor is a supporting board member of the Copper Development Association Africa (CDAA).

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>
> **Derick Coetzee** • Managing Director, Copalcor



Raw copper feedstock in the yard at Copalcor's Wadeville site.

THE CHALLENGE

Copalcor was already running a capable, well-controlled operation, doing everything the business needed to do, day in and day out. The challenge was not what the team could achieve, but how much time it took to achieve it, and how much of the effort went into pulling information together from different places.

Information spread across systems:

Data lived in Microsoft Dynamics AX 2009, in Excel-based trackers, and in separate processes across the plant and the trading branches. With stock held across manufacturing, central distribution, and five trading branches, and frequent intercompany trading, bringing a full, current picture together in one place was time-consuming.

An ageing platform:

Microsoft Dynamics AX 2009 was out of support and no longer kept pace with the way the business had grown, while licensing constraints limited how many users could log in and transact at the same time.

Manual, time-consuming steps:

Many day-to-day tasks, from reporting to proof of delivery, trip sheets, and large-scale stock takes, were handled manually or on paper. The work was done well; it simply took longer and generated more effort than it needed to.

Reporting that took time to compile:

Financial and operational reporting relied on Excel-based tracking, so producing the depth of insight the business wanted meant significant manual collation each time.

In short, Copalcor was looking for a way to do what it already did well, in less time, with all the information collated in a single, connected system.



WHY COPALCOR CHOSE IPLAN

With Microsoft Dynamics AX reaching end of life, Copalcor needed a modern platform that could carry the business forward without discarding years of Microsoft investment and user familiarity.

Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central offered a natural migration path: a cloud-based ERP with strong manufacturing, distribution, and financial capabilities that could serve both the manufacturing operations in Wadeville and the trading branches countrywide.

In iPlan, Copalcor found a local South African implementation partner with deep Business Central and manufacturing experience, able to deliver the bespoke functionality the business required, from quality control and cast traceability to the financial reporting models Copalcor needed.

THE IMPLEMENTATION



iPlan worked closely with the Copalcor team to deliver a phased, low-disruption rollout backed by an extensive programme of tailored development.

Copalcor first committed to the opening phases of iPlan's waterfall methodology, Initiation and Design, rather than the full project, keeping the decision to proceed firmly in their hands. In October 2024, iPlan ran a series of in-depth workshops covering all key areas of the business, from the rolling mill, rod production, and forgings to the trading branches and the Projects division, and produced detailed design blueprints showing how Business Central would meet Copalcor's requirements.

Satisfied with the blueprints, Copalcor gave the green light for the remaining phases, build, validate, preparation, and commission, and the implementation kicked off on 18 November 2024, covering system configuration, data migration, bespoke development, and user training. The planned go-live for Copalcor Manufacturing, Forgings, and Copalcor Trading was the end of June 2025, timed to coincide with the cutover of the financial year.



Copper strip on the rolling mill line, one of the core manufacturing processes now **supported end to end in Business Central**.

BUILT AROUND THE BUSINESS: TAILORED DEVELOPMENT

Standard ERP functionality was only the starting point. Close to 30 custom extensions were developed and deployed to shape Business Central around the way Copalcor actually works, from the shop floor and the weighbridge to the finance office.



Commodity pricing:
A custom LME integration automatically pulls London Metal Exchange prices into the system, essential for a business whose input costs move with the copper price, alongside FIFO cost visibility for accurate margin insight.



Mobile and scanning:
A custom-built mobile application, mobile scanner integration, and stores scanning support day-to-day warehouse operations and Copalcor's large-scale, lot-tracked stock takes.



Quality and traceability:
A bespoke quality control module supports the detailed QC checks the business requires, with lot traceability by cast number from raw material to finished good.



Logistics and delivery:
The Proof of Delivery application, trip sheets, and transfer document enhancements digitised the dispatch-to-delivery process end to end.



Credit and financial control:
Customer ageing by due date, credit limit templates, credit memo reporting, sales budgets, and a sales dashboard give finance and sales teams sharper, real-time control.



Financial reporting model:
Ledger OneView was built for Copalcor, giving the ability to do financial reporting in more depth and better financial visibility across the group, per month and to the level of dimensions, as a detailed financial reporting tool.



Governance and controls:
Approval workflows, mandatory master data fields, reason codes, and created-by tracking enforce the discipline that a high-value commodity business demands.



Communication and branding:
Automated batch emailing of documents, standardised email signatures, and customised, branded reports keep customer-facing output professional and consistent.

OVERCOMING THE BUMPS ALONG THE WAY

No implementation is without its challenges. What set the project apart was how quickly issues were identified and resolved together.

Licensing pressure: Midway through the project, Microsoft AX licensing issues left most branch users unable to transact in the legacy system, putting day-to-day operations at the branches under real strain.

A re-planned go-live: Rather than letting the issue derail the project, the February 2025 steering committee decided to bring the Copalcor Trading go-live forward by two months, compressing data migration, training, and cutover for the branches into a much tighter window.

Two cutovers instead of one: The team supported a live Copalcor Trading environment from the end of April 2025 while continuing the manufacturing build, and still delivered the Copalcor Manufacturing and Forgings go-live on schedule at the end of June 2025, aligned to the financial year cutover.



PROBLEMS SOLVED

With Business Central live across the group, the time and effort that once went into pulling information together have been given back to the business.

Unified data: A single source of truth across finance, inventory, production, the trading branches, Projects, and the Earthing division, with intercompany purchases and sales between divisions handled in the system rather than around it.

Live visibility: Users across the group can now see stock availability in real time, what is available, when, and where, supporting order promising and planning, while cloud licensing means many more users can work in the system simultaneously.

Faster financial reporting: Ledger OneView helps the Copalcor Group pull together financial reporting far more quickly, daily and monthly, assisting with board reporting and with the financial decisions that can be made.

Controlled workflows: Approval workflows and document control (versions, history, and approvals) now provide the security a high-value commodity like copper demands, internally and in customer and vendor interactions.

Full traceability: A bespoke quality control module supports the detailed QC checks the business requires, with lot traceability by cast number enabling full product traceability from raw material to finished good.

Digital deliveries and stock take: A custom Proof of Delivery application with trip sheet functionality gives drivers sign-on-glass capability, while scanning streamlines expense tracking and Copalcor's large-scale stock-take process, reducing effort and centralising data.



Real-time data capture on the floor: Business Central puts live information in users' hands, where the work happens.

THE RESULTS

Since going live with iPlan ERP, the difference for Copalcor has been felt most in time and in confidence: the same work the business always did well now takes less time, and the information needed to run and report on the group sits together in one connected platform.

The group now runs on one modern, supported platform, from the Wadeville plant to the trading branches countrywide. Data that once lived in spreadsheets flows through a single system, approvals are controlled and visible, deliveries are confirmed digitally at the point of drop-off, and every product can be traced back to its cast. The business is no longer constrained by an unsupported legacy system and has a platform that can grow with it.

THE BENEFITS OF PARTNERING WITH IPLAN

Local expertise:
A local South African partner who understands the market, is easy to reach, and was on hand throughout design, implementation, and go-live.

Industry fit:
Deep Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central expertise combined with genuine manufacturing and distribution experience, tailored to Copalcor's operations.

Ongoing support:
Responsive, hands-on support before, during, and after both go-lives, including supporting a live Copalcor Trading environment while the manufacturing rollout continued.

Room to grow:
A scalable, cloud-based Microsoft platform that removes the risk of unsupported legacy software and grows with the business.

True partnership:
A genuine partnership built on trust and clear communication, demonstrated when both parties re-planned the rollout together in February 2025 to protect the branches' ability to trade.

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Ready to transform your operations?

Talk to iPlan about how **the right ERP can work for your business**:

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