

IFS helps the medicine go down for leading pharmaceuticals equipment manufacturer

For Aeromatic-Fielder the introduction of an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system from IFS provided the means to re-engineer its project management, design and manufacturing systems. Out has gone wasteful duplication of effort and in came a new approach to product design, using building blocks—effectively standard modules—assembled to meet the customer’s specific requirements.

Aeromatic-Fielder is a specialist company supplying machines used in the production of pharmaceuticals. The company trades as part of Niro Pharma Systems, an international group that offers a single supplier-total solution capability for the manufacture of solid dosage medicines.

The problem

A key issue was the need to standardize and adopt common operational procedures, following the merger in 1996 of two complementary businesses operating in Switzerland and the U.K. The need for a replacement ERP system was a simple decision because Fielder’s existing DOS based integrated manufacturing system was not Y2K compliant.

“Since our machines have traditionally been built to order, our design administration was geared around the manufacturing process,” explains technical manager, Bryan Nelthorpe.

“This led to a large amount of duplication as we created different versions of the same thing—effectively reinventing the wheel just because a different type of seal was specified. Besides wasting effort, there was also a risk of losing control of the basic design. When a drawing is copied, minor details or revisions may be overlooked.”

“To solve this we needed a means for defining standard design options that could be assembled like



building blocks. This would reduce the lead time for the design of a new machine and allow us to isolate any variations for special treatment in terms of costing and procurement.”

The solution

A cardinal requirement for the new ERP system was the provision of a powerful information management platform to support the new design procedures. Central to this was the product definition management (PDM) facility that would provide the tools to build a database of all the component parts of a machine.

Implementation

The financials package was the first component to be installed and this went live in October 1998. This was followed by the full implementation including the manufacturing and engineering suites, which went live in the fall, 1999.

Benefits

Aeromatic-Fielder is standardizing its part numbering system and transferring all of the design information from its Swiss and UK legacies onto a single system with a single parts list. This involves working systematically through the products range to transfer details of every component part onto the product definition management (PDM) database. All the relevant details

concerning the part, its design, test specification and all the associations that the part has within the assembly structure of the machine are encapsulated by the PDM.



“These associations enable us to bring together the design options as standard modules,” says Brian Nelthorpe, adding, “The PDM configuration, however, did not lend itself to generating kits of parts for manufacturing as some options crossed over different assemblies. IFS therefore amended the software so we could use the system to tag each part to where it belongs in manufacturing and whether a part is a fabricated item or an assembly. The result for manufacturing was a structure that looks exactly the same as on the previous system. From a design viewpoint it is completely different and we have got control of it.”

“Previously the permutations of different bowl sizes, with two types of impeller jackets, multiplied by three types of seal, could lead to a particular detail being held on up to 30 different drawings. By stripping common modules out of the assembly structure, we have reduced the number of options to two, a big one and a little one.”

“Now design changes can be made in two places, instead of up to 30. And we can be sure the change is carried through every time we use that group in future builds. That is the most important single benefit that the IFS software has given us,” he added.

A new contract can be prepared for release to production within hours, compared to previous methods which could take up to five working days for a complex machine. Previously to create a delivery structure, the project engineer would have to enter hundreds of parts into the system for every new production contract. This has been reduced to a few lines, which has made the construction of the project much easier and faster. “It is also more efficient. Using standards and re-using standards again and

again and not playing around with them—that’s the goal,” said Brian Nelthorpe.

The ERP system has provided a greater degree of control, traceability and visibility of the project. Even with non-

standard machines, the system allows production to proceed as new parts are being designed. For customers, this ensures timely delivery of status reports and information concerning the contract. Also any queries concerning the additional cost and implication of introducing non-standard components can be raised early in the project.

According to the finance manager, Mark Holman, the IFS software has improved the quality and frequency of management reports, and the administration is being handled with fewer staff.

“We can see better where the money is going and how quickly costs accrue within the manufacturing process. We get better control and can monitor the profit margins for every project.”

Each Aeromatic machine order is effectively a substantial project, which is managed through the entire process by using IFS Project™ to provide scheduling and cost visibility. IFS Project Delivery™ is used to plan purchases and to schedule just-in-time deliveries for high value items. Achieving completion dates is also important as very often deliveries are scheduled to suit the requirement of plant installations and may involve heavy lifting equipment.

The creation of support documentation that goes with the machine is much easier with IFS. Aeromatic has a substantial spares and service support business and this is managed through IFS Distribution™ as customer orders.

Software

IFS Financials™, IFS Engineering™, IFS Manufacturing™, IFS Human Resources™, IFS Distribution™.