

## BMW Group's Swindon Pressings Limited moves forward with IFS Applications enterprise management software

**BMW Group has implemented a complete suite of IFS Application enterprise management software at its Swindon Pressings plant. Intended to replace systems operated under the previous Rover Group administration, the investment will equip the plant to become a fully autonomous supplier of body components to the auto industry.**

The Swindon plant produces steel and aluminum car body panel components and assemblies. It has a full order book and currently employs a workforce of around 2300. Production facilities include a variety of automatic and semi-automatic sheet metal presses, forming equipment and robot welding cells. Much of the output is supplied to former Rover Group associates, which are now external customers of Swindon Pressings Limited. The plant also provides components for the new MINI, produced by BMW Group at its Oxford plant.

### **The problem**

“We were faced with a choice of either trying to replicate all the existing Rover systems or do something completely different,” explains ERP project manager Richard Rigden.

“It was estimated that there were around 140 different applications serving the Swindon factory, across the different areas. Many of these were just small processes, but some 25+ were full-blown legacy applications.”

“Obviously it would not be practicable to replace each of these and we needed to find an alternative, single application solution to meet our requirement. Hence the project name SABRE was created for Single Application for Business Resources and Enterprise.”

### **Solution**

“IFS was selected because it had supplied a key legacy system used by the Rover Group and their UK-based support staff were already familiar with the existing systems landscape. Furthermore the IFS Business Modeler provided the ideal solution for mapping the existing business processes. This was required as a basis for formulating a generic specification for the new system requirements.”

Following a detailed evaluation, contracts were awarded in May 2000 covering licenses, consulting services, and maintenance and support for a comprehensive implementation serving circa 300 concurrent users.

“IFS offered the best solution for Swindon Pressings bearing in mind the size of plant and the short time-scales for the implementation,” said Richard Rigden.



## Implementation

The project has been split into three phases for implementation based around specific business processes and respective IT legacy systems. The first phase to replace all of the financial and purchasing systems was completed by the end of 2001. This also included some of the store systems and work setting up base data for the later phases.

The core manufacturing activities, replacing the logistics and the manufacturing support side of the business, are scheduled to go live during the summer 2002. The third phase covers discrete components such as human resources, maintenance, engineering and business systems which are free to move at their own speed.

Management of the project has been closely supervised by BMW with clearly defined quality objectives for project documentation. And finally, as a link back to its initial role, the IFS Business Modeler is also being used to review the company's ISO processes for the future.

### Phase 1 feedback and benefits

Whilst Richard Rigden is confident that the IFS implementation will lead to significant improvements from a process and audit traceability perspective, it is too early in the project to provide any specific figures. The important things at this stage are that the implementation is on time and as close as possible to budget.

"The aim of the whole project is to make this plant autonomous as quickly as possible. And we are on course as far as that is concerned," he said.

From an operational point of view immediate improvements are being realized with IFS in processing speed and access to the data. Flexibility on the way that entries can be configured on the general ledger was quite 'an eye opener'. This presents some challenges in making sure entries are defined correctly and posted to the right places.

IFS is undertaking a modification of the software to provide automatic invoice matching. This facility will be then be fully supported and made available as



a value-added option for future customers. Other enhancements include a module for scanning invoice documents into the IFS document management system and then taking the data to create or update the invoice record, together with an attached file for the scanned image, all in a single hit.

A notable feature on the purchasing side is the use of Streamserve software for processing the purchase order output document for different routes and formats. Streamserve can send things automatically by fax, directly from the back of IFS. It also changes the format of the purchase order depending on whether it is an open order for production—covering a whole year—or whether it is a discrete closed order.

"Although it takes some time setting up, this is a very useful tool and we are planning to extend its use for handling our labeling in phase two of the project," said Richard Rigden.

Continuing development is under way to introduce electronic requisitions, thereby replacing four or five different paper requisition forms. IFS portals will allow people to enter an electronic requisition. This is then processed electronically through authorization and conversion into a purchase order.