

## Forecasting with real numbers, not “guesstimates”, thanks to IFS Applications™

**Gables Engineering is a 52-year old avionics manufacturer that builds custom cockpit controls for the airline and airframe industry. Gables manufactures traffic collision avoidance systems (TCAS) panels, radio control panels, and audio systems. Besides designing and building the electrical assemblies, Gables also designs and builds the switches, housings, and LCD display modules. Customers include Boeing and Airbus Industries. The component-based business applications package from IFS has enabled Gables to move forward by looking forward.**

### **The Challenge**

In 1995 Gables formed a team to examine its business processes and decided it needed a new enterprise application package. At that time, Gables had a pseudo-MRP system based on reorder points. The system looked at current customer demand, as well as historical demand, and then the buyers had to fudge and figure out, “What do I really need to buy?” It was a process best described as moving forward by looking backward.

The company wanted a product using the Oracle database that had a Windows look and feel, one that



would seamlessly interface with other third party systems. An RFQ sent out to numerous vendors zeroed in on key functions as specific as a minimum 23-character field for part numbers and as general as efficient MRP, inventory control, and forecasting functions.

### **The Solution**

Gables selected IFS. The IFS ERP/e-business system includes a true MRP module that gives Gables a better grasp of actual demand. Before IFS, demand was determined by customer orders as well as by a factor for historical demand. This caused Gables to buy and build unnecessary parts, which in turn would load the shops with unnecessary work and inflate purchased inventories.

### **Benefits**

Once Gables deployed IFS, they were able to calculate demand using actual customer orders and a forecast, something their previous system wouldn't allow. Now they "move forward by looking forward"—they order and build parts by looking at forecasts and not at history, reducing work in process by 50 percent and overall inventories by 30 percent.

The software also facilitates such APICS functionality as inventory and subassembly control. It used to take two days to get a spare part shipped out, from time of order to time of shipment. With IFS, same day shipping is now possible.

The integration in the IFS applications is also very helpful. As Jonathan Wasicsko, director of quality assurance at Gables, says, "We now have one main data warehouse for all of our repair data—repairs we do in-house, warranties done by our customers, or work done by certified warranty facilities."

As for part traceability, the software tracks the history of changes made to a particular product right down to serial number. Wasicsko explains, "Everything

that goes into building that part, including the parts removed from inventory to manufacture it—all that information is maintained for us now. It will always be there to trace back if we have a bad lot of something."

Recently a Gables customer did a product audit. The auditor selected a part that had already shipped, with the intent of tracing it through the system. Gables was asked to show the traceability of a component used in the audited part's sub-assembly. This would never have been possible before the IFS implementation.

The maintenance side of the application is also used to control equipment calibration. Wasicsko notes, "IFS has a nice graphical, tree-type structure where you can view what equipment is where, based on the part number, right down to the workbench. You can set up the recall for calibration and IFS will generate a calendar that tells you what equipment is coming due. That function has eliminated another offline system we had in place that we were paying for and maintaining." This saved Gables roughly \$2,000 per year in maintenance fees.

The software has changed Gables' business in other ways. With IFS, they have gotten kitting time down to less than a month before assembly. Since they can now depend on their data, they are kitting almost 99 percent of the whole product just prior to assembling it. They have also notebooks, which allow stockroom personnel to review the pick lists online from IFS applications and pick and update inventory instantly.

Gables is looking forward. The new e-business capability the system provides will allow customers at some point in the future to place orders and track information online.

### **Software**

IFS Applications suite