

MITcon

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Manufacturing/business management

FIRST: Centurion Europe

Centurion Europe took first prize in the MITcon Manufacturing/Business Management category for the transformation it achieved in terms of data visibility, accuracy and reliability, right across the business, from its WinMan ERP project.

Implemented between February and June last year, the system was realising benefits from day one, simply by working 100% reliably all day without freezing – unlike its former mix of manual processes and an ageing Pegasus business management system.

Not only was the data now accurate and reliable; it was also much easier to access and turn into information. The company can see, for example, daily sales, in real time, and users can drill down into reports, gaining instant access to stock levels, order progress information – whatever they need.

Debi Miller, Centurion's customer service manager, gives the example of warehouse management, which previously had to wait until the following day to receive a system-generated update on the state of stock. Now, she can interrogate the system live. Similarly, she says that the mobile sales team has benefited because WinMan allows the company to track and monitor sales remotely.

Importantly, improvements in managing purchasing also had an immediate impact, because as soon as replenishment levels are reached, re-orders are automatically actioned – with information again available to sales. Miller makes the point that visibility on the progress of re-orders enables sales staff to sell products with confidence, even if they're currently out of stock. Also, the ability to run MRP to generate subassembly requirements, batch these optimally and update all component stock levels is contributing to the company's ability to reduce overall stock levels, while maintaining optimum delivery times, with an average 75% stock turnover.

Miller also believes that, ultimately, customers receive the greatest benefit, because the system has increased the company's 'in stock all the time' level to an all-time record of 97%, while enabling 95% of all orders to be supplied in-full within 48 hours – and 60% of those within 24 hours.

"Now, when a customer is on the phone, we have all the information available immediately at our fingertips – and if there's a problem, we know about it beforehand and can proactively keep the customer informed."

SECOND: Texecom

Another transformation – from running Pegasus Opera at three UK sites, alongside separate sales order systems and a mix of spreadsheets, databases and manual workarounds, to a single integrated Epicor Vantage ERP system – secured alarms manufacturer Texecom second place.

Head of IT Andy Bowden attributes some £2 million of savings to the new system, and says that, since go-live last year, Texecom has moved from zero visibility to real-time visibility of everything – right down, for example, to the status of plastic mouldings.

"Because we could see true stock requirements and usage rates, we could

identify areas where we could make significant stock reductions," explains Bowden. "So we quickly saw that one site we used for warehousing was no longer required, resulting in a saving of £600,000. Stock reduction at our moulding plant was over £300,000, while stock at our assembly plant was reduced by £1 million."

And there's more. For example, production scheduling used to consume eight people from sales, production and management in a half-day meeting every month. Now it takes two people, two hours. Sales analysis now takes three hours as opposed to three days, and the number of data input points has reduced from four to one.

Highly Commended:

- Wall Colmonoy, for its Preactor APS (advanced planning and scheduling) system, which resulted in on-time, in-full performance improving from 80% to 95%; efficiency in machining increasing from 75% up to 92%; and WIP falling from 21 racks to less than three – as well as validating business capex decisions, using 'what if' simulation.
- Pobjoy Mint, in recognition of its Access Supply chain ERP implementation, which resulted in greatly improved business agility, through visibility into operations and forecasting – enabling, for example, savings on material costs and invaluable decision support. Savings cited include works order generation time down 80% and £50,000 per annum off running costs.
- RH Technical Services for its use of Rent-IT Systems 123mrp.Net subscription-based ERP – which not only replaced an expensive AS/400 system, but saved £20,000 in material costs and 20% in stock holding, as well as shaving 50% off the time taken for production data analysis. Implementation cost the company just £6,000 and the monthly rental is £1,000. ■

