

MITcon 2008

Supply chain management

FIRST: Centurion Europe

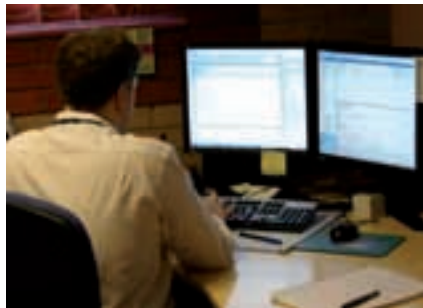
Doncaster-based tools, hardware and DIY products supplier Centurion Europe took first place in MITcon's Supply Chain Management category, because the judges felt it provides an excellent example of what can be achieved by moving from an ageing business system to modern extended ERP in one giant leap.

Centurion went for an integrated WinMan system, from SSL WinMan, which is now handling everything from supplier relationship management to stock control, workflow and CRM (customer relationship management) – essential for an organisation with 25,000 stock items and 4,000 orders per month from 7,000 customers.

The result: Centurion can now see information, such as daily sales and order progress, in real time, with all users able to drill down into the detail, according to role. Meanwhile, the ability to run MRP to accurately generate sub-assembly requirements, to batch these optimally and to 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.

While the inaccuracy of the previous system data makes quantifiable benefits hard to ascertain, Debi Miller, Centurion's customer service manager, comments that some measurable time and resource savings have been established. "We have been able to handle an increased volume of sales, simply due to the time savings and efficiency of WinMan. For example, we've eradicated all five-minute phone calls to suppliers to double check the status of an order."

In fact, this WinMan implementation is credited with increasing the company's in-stock 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 at our fingertips and if there's a problem, we know about it beforehand and can proactively keep customers informed," says Miller.

As for the future, Centurion Europe is shortly to begin the second phase, which will involve integrating its labelling system into WinMan and adding EDI.

The company is also looking to move to hand-held scanners, at first for goods-in and then for picking. Plans to implement the WinMan customer and supplier portals and a shopping cart facility are also being finalised.

SECOND: Pobjoy Mint

Pobjoy Mint – Europe's largest private mint, manufacturing coins, medals and tokens – stole second prize for its Access Supply Chain system, which now runs everything from purchasing to design, manufacture and despatch.

Production manager Mike Aldridge says it has given the company's management team vastly improved visibility. "For example, it used to take up to three hours to generate works orders every day. Now, it only takes half an hour, and production scheduling and planning data is available at the press of a button. Before, it took one person more than an hour every morning just to get the

information from all parties and key it all in."

And managing director Taya Pobjoy adds that it's a similar story throughout the business. "Before we had the system, we sometimes didn't find out we'd run out of stock until it was time to ship," she says. "Now, when you put a new coin on the system, it immediately checks that you've got what you need – and if you haven't, it tells you. It's saved us weeks in delays."

Next to come will be barcoding: "We've been looking at it because it will make stock-taking even quicker. For instance, at the moment we have to find dies manually, but in future, users will have hand-held wireless terminals, giving them real-time information on stock movements," says Pobjoy.

Highly Commended:

- GGB, for its Oracle E-Business suite project, which enabled this vast bearings organisation not only to consolidate its IT, but to cut costs, reduce inventories and improve customer service by getting slick and lean internally, inter-site and throughout its supply chain.
- UAV Engines, for Exel Computer Systems' web-based extension project, which not only enables production and engineering to share engine data as units are built, but helps customers with maintenance and spares ordering – and allows UAV to analyse data across engine types.
- Wall Colmonoy for its Preactor APS system, which enabled this alloy castings and powders manufacturer to master issues including: highly variable process steps, with multiple sequence-dependent routings according to product; internal supply chain challenges; changeover times ranging from 30 minutes to two hours; cross-contamination problems; floating tool resources; and the usual machine centre skills issues. ■