

In Motion

Automotive manufacturer keeps products moving with new ERP system

CHALLENGE: Find a modestly priced, highly effective enterprise tool that could be implemented quickly

PRODUCT SOLUTION: WinMAGI from Manufacturing Action Group Inc.

COMPANY: Alphi Manufacturing

FACILITIES: Jonesville, Michigan

OPERATION: Manufacturers of tubular products for the automotive and other industries

The challenge

When most of the manufacturing at an automotive facility in Jonesville, Michigan, moved offshore, the owner decided to sell the operation and a lower-volume product line to a team of company managers. These managers then founded a new company, Alphi Manufacturing.

Alphi leaders and employees knew how to manufacture their products, which include precision tubular structures for air conditioning units, instrument panels, windshield wipers, and rear subframes. However, Alphi had no planning or financial management capability because the parent company had taken the software when it moved away. There are no second chances in the automotive industry, and Alphi leaders knew informal systems could maintain on-time delivery to their customers for only a very short time. They had to find a software solution fast.

Philip Marshallsay, an Alphi owner and its chief financial officer, took it upon himself to find enterprise resources planning (ERP) software that could handle all of his organization's requirements. Nevertheless, he was concerned that high-functionality software would cost more than his new company could afford, and he feared he would be forever unhappy with the caliber of software he could buy with his limited funds. Marshallsay wondered if it was possible to find ERP software with the upscale features he

had come to appreciate, at an affordable price, and with fast implementation potential.

The solution

Marshallsay selected WinMAGI ERP software from Manufacturing Action Group Inc. (MAGI). The solution is an enterprise system that blends accounting and manufacturing practices and is designed specifically for small and midsized organizations.

"We were looking for a low-cost tool that offered all the functionality of a larger ERP system, but would be scalable to a business of our size," Marshallsay says. "We wanted all the features of a larger system, but something that is easy to train [people on] and implement."

WinMAGI had the engineering, supply chain, scheduling, order entry, and financial features he wanted—and a few features he never thought he would find anywhere. For example, the tool offers hybrid costing, which enables Marshallsay to cost parts the way he always wanted: High-volume parts can be assigned standard costing; low-volume parts or prototypes can be assigned actual costing; and raw material, subject to severe price fluctuations, can be assigned average actual costing.

Marshallsay also knew he would want to make a few custom changes to the solution. WinMAGI made customization easy, and subsequent upgrades did not disconnect his preferences—something he thought was impossible. Plus, WinMAGI provides Alphi with flexibility. Users quickly can change the number of digits to the right of the decimal and expand the number of digits allowed for a part number. In fact, they can expand or contract every

field or even rename them, if needed. In addition, security can be established at the field level instead of the file level.

The results

Alphi employees previously had put business data into spreadsheets. MAGI used these spreadsheets and converted Alphi's data in just three days. Train-the-trainer classes started on day 4, and Marshallsay assigned specific people to classes and attended them himself, too. Upon completion of the training classes, on day 11, he installed the software and spent three days showing key employees how to use it to manage their responsibilities. Final data conversion was completed on day 14, and employees began using the system to manage the business.

In addition to customizing the training classes, MAGI initially

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assigned extra people to its helpdesk to field questions from Alphi employees. The volume of questions was reduced to normal by day 17.

Marshallsay continues to be impressed by WinMAGI's scalability and regularly introduces his employees to additional features as they become more comfortable using the software. Three years have passed since the initial implementation, and Marshallsay reports that the software's ease of use and intuitive functionality continue to keep Alphi organized, profitable, and well managed. 