



FACTIVITY

CASE STUDY - ARGENT INTERNATIONAL

in touch with factory floor innovation

The Challenge

Implement a paperless ERP system that would overcome language barriers between employees and enhance the current data collection and communication processes.

The Results

- Operators quickly learning software with limited training, despite the language barrier
- Continuous streams of quality data
- Increased levels of customer service resulting from the ability to track a job in process.
- Significantly increased time savings – operators were not manually tracking data and no data entry was necessary from information entered on time tickets and production reports
- Increased awareness from all facets of manufacturing operations, in particular engineering, ensuring that routings, standards, rates, and machine times are accurate before a job gets to the floor
- Increased visibility of the manufacturing processes

“Bottom line, we have increased our productivity . . . we have become more flexible to respond quicker to our customers.”

--John Haapala, Vice President

In Search of the Paperless Floor

Located in a 70,000 square-foot facility in Novi, Michigan, Argent International manufactures custom engineered adhesive-backed components for the automotive and industrial markets. While communication at the company's facility was good, Argent, which is highly customer focused, wanted to further enhance its communication between shifts and between departments. Like most companies, many of Argent's manufacturing employees have diverse cultural backgrounds, contributing to the communication challenge. In addition, Argent felt that electronically automating information between shifts and between employees could improve productivity through greater data accuracy.

Real time information collection and interpretation—right on the factory floor—would give Argent a “snap shot” of its operations at any time with touch of a computer screen. Also, they wanted a system that could easily locate people, equipment and jobs with a user-friendly solution that readily adapts to a multicultural environment.

Designers and converters of pressure sensitive adhesives and material composites to the automotive and industrial markets, Argent's goal was to work smarter, not harder. “We wanted to utilize leading edge automation technologies to increase productivity and realize other efficiencies,” says Linda Sedik, Argent's IT director. “It was our chance to start fresh with the new ERP system.” Coming off of a heavily modified system with many ancillary software packages, Argent determined that any add-on software packages would have to integrate cleanly.

Seeking a solution that provided real time labor and costing information, Sedik and her colleagues turned to Factivity. Factivity is an advanced Manufacturing Execution System (MES) that performs data collection directly from the factory floor with intuitive, touch-screen computers located at the site of each critical process. Because every process is tracked electronically via touch screen computers on the factory floor, information that is critical to manufacturing efficiency is at Argent's fingertips—from inventory levels to personnel. And since the system operates in “real time,” changes—such as customer quantities and delivery dates—can be automatically adjusted with a new allocation of resources.

In addition to providing automated data collection, Factivity measures productivity and responds quickly to changing customer and order requirements.

“The features that impressed us with Factivity were the touch-screen technology, its clean, color-coded computer screens, and the ability to customize the screens to accommodate different languages,” said Sedik. “We knew we needed something easy because of the language barrier in our factory.”

Of equal importance was Factivity's ability to quickly bolt on to Argent's ERP system. Sedik's team originally explored bar-coding solutions, but kept coming back to Factivity due to the intuitive screen layout and user friendliness. “We kept thinking of the user and how much training it would take to get someone functional,” said Rick Pearce, Argent's IT manager.