

Earlex Powers Ahead with Macola

Earlex, based in Guildford, Surrey, is a leading manufacturer of power decorating and power cleaning appliances for both the professional and DIY markets. Being innovators at heart (Earlex brought the first DIY steam wallpaper stripper to market), the introduction of lean manufacturing over the last few years led inevitably to a review of its MRP (Material Requirements Planning) and finance systems.

Searching for a Unified Approach

In 2007, Earlex started to look at what the market had to offer, whittling the options down to a short list of five. The existing Pegasus systems were 'long in the tooth' and consisted of separate MRP and finance packages. Earlex knew there would be benefits in having a system which combined all the functions they required. During a broad look at the market, including the latest Pegasus offering and a system from SAP, Earlex found Exact Macola ES.

Macola ES seemed to tick all the boxes, particularly when combined with Event Manager, the native Excel add-in reporting tools, and Crystal Reports. And when they started talking to Lynq Ltd, sole distributor and reseller of Exact Macola products in the UK and Europe, Earlex realised they had found a supplier which wanted to understand its business.

"They really listened to what we wanted"

Unlike the other systems Earlex looked at, Lynq was able to demonstrate at a very early stage what Macola could do for the company. Kevin Pavia, Earlex's Commercial Director says ...



"The great thing about the Lynq people was they really listened to what we wanted, and got to grips with understanding our business from the outset"

... none of the other potential providers did this.

When the development of Lynq's Visual Planner and HyperLynq applications came out of the discussions, Earlex knew they'd found their 'Holy Grail', and signed up for Macola ES in December 2007.

All Change over a Long Weekend

Changing the computer systems at the core of a manufacturing business is no trivial matter, and Earlex gave themselves and Lynq the first half of 2008 to plan and prepare down to the last detail. With Earlex firmly in the project's driving seat, the company took the opportunity to change some of its business and planning processes, bringing them into alignment with the way Macola would be operated.

Lynq's programmers and support staff, managed by MD Peter Hayes, put huge amounts of effort into the data mapping and conversion tasks. The initial trials in June 2008 were a complete



success, and paved the way for the final conversion of live data at the end of July.

The changeover was timed to coincide with the Earlex year end and annual stocktake. Within the 3-day window, the data was converted, and Exact Macola ES was up and running ready for the stocktake results to be entered.

Production Scheduling takes a Leap Forward

Earlex has around 50 Macola users, across departments from Finance to UK Sales, covering every aspect of its manufacturing operation. With the introduction of Macola ES, the company now has a system which provides the integration of processes, completing the move to lean manufacturing.

As the system only went live on the 1st August 2008, Earlex has yet to identify all the benefits. Kevin Pavia describes the change in production scheduling as probably the most obvious and immediate improvement. Visual Planner provides the scheduling flexibility Earlex had been looking for, with live factory floor scheduling and re-scheduling feeding directly back into Macola MRP records. Prior to the implementation of Macola, the production schedulers had to trawl through Excel

spreadsheets, manually updating their old system.

All Positive Feedback

When asked how the staff have reacted to the Macola system and Lynq, Kevin declares everyone has been very positive because their ability to extract and use information has been made easier and quicker. And because Lynq have provided first class support and additional training where it was needed, there have been no post-implementation blues.

Kevin Pavia says of Lynq's MD, Peter Hayes,

"Peter's background in accountancy (which he shares with Kevin) means he is systematic and logical in his approach, which was essential when implementing this IT system. I found it very easy dealing with Peter. I could explain things about our business which we needed to understand from a Macola point of view, and Peter could always make that translation easy for us."