

Thilmany Papers Case Study



Background:

In June of 2005, Kohlberg, LLC, purchased Thilmany Papers from International Paper (IP). The acquisition included a pulp mill, two paper mills and a paper converting facility in the Green Bay, WI area.



The Problem:

As part of the sale agreement, IP agreed to let the new company use the existing IP legacy business systems for an interim period. This meant that the new company would have to find replacements for almost every system including the SAP financials, Plant Maintenance, mainframe order entry and scheduling systems, shipping and invoicing. During assessment of integration, Thilmany's legacy Manufacturing Execution System was selected for replacement as well.

The system replacement was a massive undertaking that in the end would require sophisticated integration and the coordination of over 30 software/consulting companies to replace all business system software for the new company.

Oracle's JD Edwards EnterpriseOne was selected as the backbone ERP solution because of its proven track record of successful implementations and strong presence in paper manufacturing in Wisconsin.

Thilmany Papers Case Study

The Financial and Plant Maintenance systems were implemented in the first phase of the ERP deployment in June of 2006. During the planning for the second phase, the project team soon realized that the ERP system would not be able to handle the paper specific scheduling requirements without modification. The team did its homework well, evaluating several scheduling software solutions resulting in the selection of Preactor.

In addition to the complex nature of paper machine block scheduling, Thilmany wanted to make sure that it did not just replace the functionality of its old system. Thilmany wanted to use modern technology to address its two biggest problems with the old system: firstly, it was manually intensive and secondly, it did not make scheduling data available to other users.

The Solution:

Preactor was selected as the software solution due to its flexibility and installation successes. Suncoast Scheduling Technologies (SST) was selected as the implementation partner for Preactor based on its proven track record of having successfully implemented a number of complex scheduling systems. SST was able to demonstrate how its unique 'rules-based' batch scheduling module and its graphical scheduling tools were able to best meet the needs of Thilmany's schedulers and the overall business.

Although time was critical, SST spent several weeks making sure that the new system addressed the underlying business needs. Before moving ahead everyone had to sign off on the design specifications which were laid out in a non-technical, business-oriented, scheduling white paper. Once everyone had agreed on the design it was clear that the solution would require four new modules.

The first module, the **Integration Manager**, manages the flow of data to and from JDE. This includes receiving new, changed and deleted work orders from JDE; sending the latest schedule dates for each work order back to JDE; receiving shop floor updates from JDE; and sending orders for trimming and receiving trimmed orders back from JDE.

The **Batching Rules Engine** allows the schedulers to automate the process of grouping orders into specific blocks based on certain attributes, dates and available capacity. The **Block Editor** provides the scheduler with a powerful set of tools using a friendly graphical user interface. This enables the scheduler to fine tune the schedule by splitting orders, moving orders by dragging and dropping them, and releasing orders for trimming and manufacturing.

The last module, the **Reporting Manager**, provides schedulers and other users, such as customer service, with reports, inquiries and graphics that give a real-time view of critical scheduling data to those who need it.

Thilmany Papers Case Study

The Implementation:

The devil lies in the details and the smoothness at which all the manufacturing systems were implemented overnight on March 1, 2007 belied the hundreds of hours of planning and testing that had gone before. IT Director, Rod Glauser, pointed out that they were able to take orders, schedule them, manufacture them, deliver them and invoice them without interruption from day one.

The Conclusion:

The end result is that Thilmany now has a new fully integrated ERP system that was implemented with an aggressive timeline and budget. They have now begun to leverage this system for operational and financial efficiencies due to the access to quality real time data.

Deb VanderHeiden, the Planning & Scheduling team leader, explained that the new technology meant that the company now didn't have to manually touch every new order which allowed her group to concentrate on handling exceptions and resolving problems before they happened. She added that she was also very excited by the ease of use of the new scheduling tools and the fact that customer service now had the ability to do real-time capacity inquiries and make accurate promise dates while customers were on the phone.