Windings Powers Up with SYSPRO

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Scott Ward, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Windings

The Company

Windings, Inc. specializes in the custom production of electromagnetic motors, generators and sub-assemblies for numerous industries, including factory automation, renewable energy, automotive, medical, aerospace and defense. The company, which is headquartered in New Ulm, Minnesota, was founded in 1965 and is now 100% employee-owned.

The motors and generators that Windings builds are used in a variety of applications - everything from pumping fuel to running the refrigeration systems and controlling the flaps on aircraft such as the new Boeing 787. Windings motors are also used in satellites and defense projects.

Windings continues to grow its customer base via word-of-mouth and occasional appearances at both general and industry-specific trade shows. The company's reputation for quality is also instrumental in expanding its customer roster.

The Challenge

While Windings specializes primarily in custom-made products for which it offers full technical backup and support, the company also produces a niche line of motors inherited from some customers. In fact, Windings is unique in that its assembly service as a contract manufacturer has to compete with many of its customers' manufacturing operations.

Scott Ward, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, comments: "We have highly trained personnel who have worked on the difficult parts for many, many years. This is why customers with whom we compete on one level will come to us to produce highly specialized, low-quantity run motors, most typically of the permanent magnet type."

Until 1998, Windings had been using an IBM System 36 and associated software to run its accounting, manufacturing and distribution operations. However, the system lacked the flexibility required to deal with mixed-mode manufacturing operations, including make-to-stock and make-to-order.

AT A GLANCE

COMPANY

Windings, Inc.

INDUSTRY

Machinery and Equipment:
- Manufacturing

THE CHALLENGE

- Custom-made and niche product lines
- Complex, highly specialized customer requirements
- Flexibility to deal with mixed-mode manufacturing, including make-to-stock and make-to-order

SOLUTION & SERVICES

- Bill of Materials
- Sales Orders
- SYSPRO Analytics
- Return Materials Authorization
- Report Writer
- Quotations
- Factory Documentation
- Material Requirements Planning
- Work in Progress

THE BENEFITS

- Massive growth without increase in headcount
- Enhanced efficiencies
- Real-time data on the manufacturing floor
- Improved customer service
- Reduced inventory levels

Windings inc
Employee Owned

The Solution

With assistance from Enterprise Minnesota (an NIST/MEP affiliate) to find the company's software replacement, Windings made the decision to purchase SYSPRO Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software from RTE, St. Cloud, Minnesota in 1998.

"We looked at several options, and we agreed that SYSPRO not only possessed the versatility we were seeking, but also offered migration to SQL, which would enable us to do custom programming and incorporate a greater degree of analytics into our decision-making processes," Ward says.

RTE provided implementation assistance for SYSPRO. Windings staff members were proactive in their approach to implementation and extremely successful in making the transition to SYSPRO in a relatively short time frame. Windings continues to maximize use of the software by staying current with new releases.

The Result

Ward agrees that the years have proven the choice of SYSPRO to be a wise decision. "Our business has grown by 600% in the past 12 years, while our office staff has virtually remained the same," he says.

SYSPRO has boosted efficiencies at Windings in a number of ways. The company developed interfaces between SYSPRO and its Shop Floor program, and these interfaces enable it to obtain real-time data on what's happening on the manufacturing floor.

When engineering makes a product change, the production floor immediately gets the documentation and is able to make the necessary adjustments on a timely basis. Commensurately, the production floor uploads real-time data to the SYSPRO database, indicating such information as when a new job is initiated. In this manner, Customer Service is able to notify the customer, advising the status of the job, including details such as how much time is left on the job and whether the product will ship on time. If the delivery is delayed for some reason, Windings is able to provide early warnings to the customer.

Ward explains that SYSPRO has also been instrumental in reducing inventories, advising that custom manufacturing often necessitates maintaining high inventory levels.

"We use SYSPRO trial kitting a lot," he says. "When a sales order is entered into SYSPRO's Sales Order module, we have a custom program that generates an electronic form. The information goes to engineering for review and a bill of materials is created, which also details the production routing. The form then goes to purchasing to assess the material requirements and whether the items are in stock. If materials have to be ordered, purchasing indicates their arrival dates. The form then goes to the master scheduler to actually create the job in SYSPRO, and all interested parties are notified, initiating the process."

Windings is now reviewing whether to add SYSPRO Customer Relationship Management functionality to elevate customer service to even higher levels via enhanced marketing, sales and service co-ordination. The company is also anticipating the release of SYSPRO Workflow Services to facilitate information flow and review.