Customer Profile

Inalfa Roof Systems saves with Infor PLM Discrete

Facts at a glance

Product: Infor PLM Discrete, Infor Baan IV
Industry: Manufacturing & Distribution
Country: USA

"Using Infor applications, Inalfa has reduced costs and increased efficiencies in all areas by 30% on average."

—Bill Rice,
VP of Information Technology,
Inalfa Roof Systems, Inc NA

About the company

Headquartered in the Netherlands, Inalfa is one of the world's largest providers of innovative vehicle roof systems, including the development and manufacturing of sunroofs and open-roof systems that are delivered directly to and installed at car manufacturers' assembly lines.

The three Inalfa product groups consist of standard products, special/ innovative roof systems, and truck hatches. Almost 90% of every new car model passes through Inalfa's engineering department. Learn more by visiting www.inalfa-roofsystems.com.

Setting the strategy

In an increasingly competitive global market, Inalfa needed more flexibility to be able to respond more quickly to the constantly changing requirements of the automotive supply business, including the way in which it communicated with customers and suppliers. The company concluded that its business processes needed to be redefined, standardized, and deployed worldwide so that all business roles are consistent throughout every region. Its goal was to implement a uniform, integrated solution to help facilitate the company's global expansion, leverage resources across operations, improve collaboration and inventory management, and ultimately respond more quickly to market changes through constant operational review and continuous efficiency improvement.

Inalfa evaluated new ERP and product lifecycle (PLM) management systems to enable it to extend a range of engineering capabilities—from product design and development to integration of roof systems into vehicles and to its distributed customer base.

Getting business specific

When Inalfa began its search for an ERP and a PLM system, one of its major requirements was that the vendor be world-class. Inalfa selected Infor™ Baan IV and Infor PLM Discrete because they proved to meet Inalfa world-class standards for business improvement. Bill Rice, vice president of Information Technology at Inalfa in the US, explains, "We needed a supplier that could go anywhere and communicate globally because our industry expects it of us. We selected Infor because of its system support for various business roles across the organization coupled with advanced inventory management capabilities. Also, Infor's technology partner, Bridgelogix, is capable of working directly with us, and the company uses Infor's ERP barcoding feature, which is a widely used barcode data collection solution."

Seeing results

After a brief period of implementing Infor Baan IV and PLM Discrete, Inalfa began realizing an immediate return on its investment. Rice notes, “Using the Infor applications, we were able to redefine and standardize nearly all of our business processes—inventory management, transaction processing, purchasing, and engineering, including global engineering change orders. These changes resulted in tremendously streamlined operations.”

The company points to several reasons for being able to achieve its business goals. “The Infor integrated system improved communication because all users worldwide have real-time access to the same information system and follow the same processes, improving our decision-making and resulting in a streamlined logistic and financial flow,” Rice contends. “The transaction processing that drives uniformity across the enterprise converts logistics transactions into financial transactions.”

The automated logistic flow is based on EDI from customers and suppliers using bar codes. “With the new barcoding process,” Rice asserts, “we have fewer failures and a traceable logistics flow.”

Inalfa’s improved barcode processes have resulted in improvements within various areas such as license-plate tracking in receiving, shipping, and outside processing for reworked parts. Rice adds, “The end-of-line error proofing (scan to verify) helps to meet our customer requirements to prevent misloaded and mislabeled products. It also enables improved inventory control because, instead of consuming WIP by back-flushing material at production reporting, material is consumed when it is transferred to the production line. So misreporting does not affect inventory accuracy.”

Rice notes also that the labor reporting feature of the system helps to report labor against production without requiring production orders.

“With the Infor applications,” Rice contends, “we can capture product information from the first customer request for quote and take advantage of the new automated change process. We can better manage revisions, deal with costs and delays as well as obsolete or excess inventory, and monitor our margins and success rates to bring new products to market more easily. Open architecture also helps us create strong supply chain connections through integration of standards and web support.”

Infor’s applications have resulted in other benefits at Inalfa. Rice mentions that the ability to access accurate information empowers the user base to proactively perform analyses to understand how changes affect cost, inventory, quality, production schedules, and cycle time.

“The process has enhanced our lean manufacturing methods, including material tracking on the factory floor,” he says. “And the role-based retrieval of information is a tremendous enhancement, allowing us to easily view and reuse information to leverage these standards.”

Rice also claims that the integrated software enables collaborative engineering while following customer requirements, and the software can grow with the company. “We have visibility and control over all the processes involved in moving products from design to market. With this increased agility, we can design products faster and more reliably, respond quickly to changing market conditions, and improve customer responsiveness.”

Inalfa’s expectations resulting from implementation of the Infor applications were exceeded, according to Rice. “Our perpetual inventory in North America is now 99.7% accurate against physical inventory, which helps to prevent line shutdowns to customers and charge-backs. We are now able to reduce the time and manpower needed to complete our physical inventory by 50%.”

Doing business better

After early process improvements that proved significant, Inalfa focused on enhancing process efficiencies, improving customer responsiveness, and gaining competitive advantage. “The Infor applications have helped us revolutionize the way we handle nventory management, engineering operations, and purchasing,” Rice proclaims. “Inalfa has reduced costs and increased efficiencies in all areas by 30% on average. We now have a tremendous competitive advantage in negotiations with suppliers, customers, and prospects. And we will continue to look to Infor as we grow and evolve.”

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