Planning period shortened by more than 20%, and reduced planning staff by 50%

Fuji Film Computer System Co., Ltd

Founded: July 1, 1998
Capital: 490 million yen
Annual turnover:
Number of employees: 130
Business description: Developing information system strategies for Fuji Film Group & establishing and managing their information system

URL: http://ffcs.fujifilm.co.jp

Fuji Film Computer System Co., Ltd. was founded in 1998, and is an information service company engaging in IT related business affairs for Fuji Film Group, dealing with the development, establishment and management of information system strategies for the whole group.

A visit was made to Fuji Film's Kanagawa Plant - founded in October 2006 by taking over Fuji Photo Film Co., Ltd. - which manufactures products such as camera films and X-ray films. In March 2004, this plant completed the introduction of Asprova in order to promote efficiency in preparing process planning for those products. At that time, Fuji Film Computer System led the implementation.

Mr. Ozawa of the Logistics System Department, System Division, commented on the purpose of introducing Asprova, the points why it was chosen, and the actual benefits brought forth by the introduction of Asprova.

"We found it hard to draw a line between standard functions and customization"

In regard to the introduction of Asprova, Fuji Film Computer System has independently promoted the establishment of its system without depending on system development companies for help. There were reasons why this company played the main role in advancing this project. Around that time, the environmental changes that surrounded the Group had just become severe. Consolidations of departments and divisions were underway, as well as the relocation of machinery.

Tatsuya Ozawa
Logistic System Department,
System Division

"In order to cope with rapidly changing business environments around that time, the manufacturing process for camera films required an improvement in efficiency in preparing plans. Given these circumstances, we considered utilizing Asprova as it was not only already in place for our other products but also didn't require a high introduction cost."

Introducing Asprova, Aiming at Efficiency in Planning

The manufacturing processes for camera films, to which Asprova is applied, are divided into the following 4 main processes: First, the roll-shaped films that were already manufactured at a different manufacturing process are cut into the designated width (i.e., size for usage). Next, the punching treatment (i.e., the making holes) is conducted, to allow the film to be set on the camera itself. Third, the treatment which winds film to the core (i.e., spool). Last, the exterior wrapping treatment prior to shipment, in which films are put into either plastic cases or exterior boxes.

There are 6 manufacturing processes, if the detailed manufacturing processes are included. In this state, the number of work applications amounts to 600 to 700 on a monthly basis. So the number of work instructions amounts to about 4,000 monthly. The number of manufacturing BOMs amounts to 5,000 - 6,000. In addition, it is common to undertake speculative production for domestic products, while products for export are normally manufactured after receiving orders. Prior to the introduction of Asprova, the system of the host computer dealt with the preparation of planning for this processing manufacturing process. Previously, a one month operational plan used to be set up for each machine as well as for each manufacturing process. Around that time, it took about 4.5 days to prepare such planning. On those occasions, re-scheduling required a lot of troublesome labor and time when changing the plan a little bit.

To solve such problems as well as realize the promotion of efficiency in preparing planning, Fuji Film Computer System Co. Ltd. proposed the establishment of a system at its Kanagawa Plant which would make it possible to easily prepare planning through the utilization of a GUI (Graphical User Interface). It insisted on the utilization of a readily available packaged product without spending excessive extra time, or cost.

As a result, Asprova was chosen. Mr. Ozawa of the Logistic System Department, System Division, comments on why it was selected. "Prior to its introduction, Asprova was actually put in place for the preparations of the production plans. In fact, this was applied to several products that were being manufactured at our plant. Although the product was different, it had similar manufacturing processes. We realized that Asprova could be applied to the manufacturing processes for camera films. Also, it didn't require much cost for its introduction. This was a great benefit."

Asprova APS

Points highly rated by Fuji Film Computer Systems :
-promotion of visualization
-keeping delivery dates
-reducing inventory
-improving operational ratio
-reducing lead-time
-improving throughput
-reducing planning cycle
-handling frequent planning changes
-sharing know-how

In addition, a new machine which enabled the combination of several manufacturing processes came into being. Given these circumstances, it would have required more time and money to outsource the information system. Recalling that point in time, Mr. Ozawa commented.

"We depended on our in-house technology 100% in order to complete the introduction of Asprova. However, it was very difficult to proceed with this project manpower-wise. The reason was that we had to learn about Asprova and comprehend the on-site production constraints and applicable structures at the same time. Nonetheless, we felt that Asprova was an easy tool to deal with because its system was logically built up. Also, it was easy to understand the flow where the data is first input, and then goes through the treatment process, and is finally output."

In short, the flow of the system completed through the introduction of Asprova works in the following manner: 1) The "product demand and supply system" accepts both receiving order data and prospective data, 2) It allocates the inventory for the sales forecast of the products in question, 3) It conveys to Asprova the required quantities for the actual production, 4) based on which Asprova sets up the scheduled planning.

On the other hand, as the work to be handled on the user side, the add-on system deals with treatments that change the already applied quantitative data or make decisions on whether wrapping materials are to be manufactured at the in-house plant or outsourced based on the availability of the budget. "This is where we struggled to divide the our requirements into those which could be handled by Asprova's standard features, and those which required customization using the add-on system", says Mr. Ozawa.

In addition, the company independently developed the master registry system by itself. This was prepared so as to minimize user labor as much as possible in case of the occurrence of any environmental changes.

Winning the understanding of shop floor management

In the process of introducing this Project, Mr. Ozawa also stated that they had paid close attention to acquiring the consensus from the shop floor.

"Some people tend to show feelings of rejection against any changes that are to take place along with the introduction of a new system. Given this situation, I frequently made personal visits to the shop floor and tried to establish good relationships while promoting the prospective benefits that could be brought forth to our whole company. In doing so, I won the people's understanding toward the introduction of Asprova," says Mr. Ozawa.

In the past, for example, the films had been manufactured in 1,000 lot units. However, Asprova assigns the resources abilities in units of "time." It will be thus inevitable to generate fractions in terms of the "numbers" of which the films are to be produced. The manager of the shop floor showed his reluctance for this kind of change. However, it was realistically possible to cope with this kind of situation.

"In this regard, I emphasized the following benefits in order to persuade him. The faster the scheduled plan was made, the faster it became to order wrapping materials from wrapping materials manufacturers. This would then enable the realization of our smooth deliveries. In addition, it would also shorten time in replying to our Sales Department on delivery dates. Furthermore, it would speed up the process in making distribution planning on whether products are to be shipped for export or warehoused in Japan," says Mr. Ozawa.

Actually, the introduction of Asprova has brought forth the 2 main benefits as follows:

First, it was made possible to realize the reduction in time for preparing plans, which had required much time in the past, by more than 20%.

Second, there were several people assigned to preparing plans at each department and each manufacturing process. However, the number of such people was reduced to less than half. In addition, those planners used to store the "implicit knowledge" such as the number of films that retained between respective manufacturing process, in their heads. However, such knowledge were made available as much as possible for the use of Asprova planning parameters, and were then taken over to the new planners in charge. In so doing, it was possible to realize the consolidation of this valuable human know-how into system resources.

Now, 20-30% of the manufacturing process for processing photo films is now automated through the introduction of Asprova. In this respect, Mr. Ozawa concluded his summary as follows:

"This time, the main purpose of introducing Asprova was to promote the automation of and improve the efficiency in preparing plans. This has resulted in shortening the time for the plans preparatory work and reducing the number of such planners. These 2 points have been achieved successfully. So we highly rate the project undertaken this time. In the future, we will be considering further improvements in efficiency in this field by expanding the scope of automated planning preparatory work."

Asprova Corporation
Location: Gotanda Mikado Building 8F, Hiratsuka 2-5-8, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo
Phone: (03)5498-7071
Fax: (03)5498-7072
http://www.asprova.jp/