

Panasonic Corporation

Company name: Panasonic Home Appliances Ltd
 Kitchen Appliance Business Unit Hyogo Plant
 Factory: Saho-5, Kato City, Hyogo
 Headquarters: 2-3-1-1, Noji East, Kusatsu city, Shiga
 Founded: December 1991
 Employees: 300 (Hyogo plant, 2009)
 Main products: IH rice cookers, cooking accessories



Hyogo factory introduces Asprova
Production lead time reduced from 2 weeks to 1 week, planning time reduced from 8 man-days to 2 man-days

Panasonic Home Appliances Ltd, produces electric rice cookers from individual parts to product assembling, and supplies product and services worldwide as a cooking appliances manufacturer. They introduced Asprova to their production line for circuit boards for induction heating (IH) rice cookers and other IH cooking heaters. Asprova was introduced and in use in 2000. When upgrading in 2008, they purchased one more license and intend to expand the scope further in the future. The Kitchen Appliances business unit Hyogo Plant, manufacturing section leader Mr. Hyakutake and his staff Miss Tsuboi and Mr. Onishi told us about problems solved by Asprova, their approach and the effects.

Handwritten + obsolete scheduler mixed system cost too much time and labor

Hyogo factory mounting board is divided into two major areas. In the implementation area, more than 50 machines are fixing components to printed circuit boards, while in the assembling area, assembly and inspection are carried out by hand in 8 lines.

Before implementing Asprova, they were making production plans by hand working with paper forms, using two planners in the shop floor, in addition to two more specifically-assigned workers from production management. Parts of some processes were using an obsolete scheduler program, overall effect was unsatisfactory.

Rice cookers need to be held in stock by retail stores, and plan modifications occur frequently due to fluctuations in demand. The plan was reviewed twice a week, each time making a new plan from scratch - a heavy burden indeed.

Making process plans efficiently with Asprova

In mounting board, there are mainly 5 processes using Asprova.

1. Reflow process
2. Insert process
3. Chip process
4. Variant process
5. Assembling process



Order Number : 70 per day
 Production : 10000 units per day
 Boards used by other IH cooking heaters are also mounted here.

■Users



Panasonic Home Appliances Ltd
Kitchen Appliances business
unit Hyogo Plant,
Manufacturing section

Leader

Mr. Hyakutake Kenji (center)
Miss Rika Tsuboi (right)
Mr. Onishi Noriaki (left)

■Implementation partner



Kurabo Industries Ltd.
Information System
department, Sales section
Assistant director
Mr. Shinichi Takayama

Amazed by the power of expression

Mr. Hyakutake recalled implementing Asprova in 2002, saying:

“I was shocked to see the Gantt chart on a computer screen that time. Not only would we be free from hand writing work, but also would be able to make the schedule to a much finer degree”.

The challenges of implementing were: “The master data setup was hard indeed. It took approximately three months to complete. But we are repaid by much easier work later.”

Asprova Upgrade

Miss Tsuboi, who knows about the situation before and after Asprova upgrade, says “Through upgrading, Asprova overall became more expressive. With so many items and jobs being carried out in small lots, it is important to understand the entire process visually, and Asprova is very effective in that regard. Because we wanted to go on using parts of the previous version expression, we asked our SI Kurabo Corporation to arrange many display settings. I really appreciate their help in reaching our goal.”

Implementing Step by Step

About the knack of using Asprova, Mr. Onishi says “Currently we don’t let Asprova do everything. There are some parameters we have not set yet, so we assign these operations manually, and then run the rest of the schedule around those. In the future, I want to study the capabilities of the available dispatching rules to automate more of this process. Either way, without using Asprova schedule creation is a very difficult task for us. Asprova was selected as a partner base on Mr. Onishi’s judgement.

Reduction in production lead time and planning time

Regarding Asprova’s effect, Mr. Hyakutake says “Planning process before was mainly only per-day granularity. By using Asprova, we became able to make work orders by each hour, so production lead times reduced from 2 weeks to 1 week. Needless to say planning time was also reduced, from 4 people taking 2 days, to 2 people taking 1 day. During the initial stages of implementing, there was confusion and resistance at shop floor because of the planning hour units. However, communication with shop floor staff eventually allowed us to grasp production capacity more accurately.”

Quoting delivery dates accurately

In addition, improvements were also seen in quoting delivery dates. “Thanks to a detailed plan, we can answer delivery date requests more accurately, and quicker.” They also became able to deal with rush orders more flexibly.

Future development

Mr. Hyakutake said that he wanted Asprova as a ‘tool to make money’. “In seeking to cut costs, not only can we reduce the manpower used in planning, but we also expect we can improve other areas such as progress tracking, performance, parts inventory, which can benefit from connection with this scheduler.”

Scheduler leading vendor: Asprova Corporation

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