



BMW makes line-side in-sequence a flexible reality

Truck jams and failures of just in time (JIT) line-side delivery at the BMW 3 Series Munich Plant are now a thing of the past, thanks to an automated tracking and vehicle prioritising system that's linked directly to the firm's supplier management and ERP system.

BMW's problem was that, with daily truck deliveries growing to around 140, the old ways of drivers moving to loading bays after registering at goods receiving, were no longer working.

Bays were not always free, but also order of arrival was being compromised, resulting in tailbacks, out of sequence material deliveries and the small bay buffer stores backed up.

Solving all that has been achieved with a SyncroSupply system from German Inform, which now controls truck movements in accordance with BMW's material call system, with automated prioritisation in near real time. Vehicles are tracked on

site using transponders, and drivers are in communication with plant management using pagers.

Now, the BMW site is advised of trucks approaching either via transport notification (ASN or loading list) or time schedules from ERP.

Arrival timeframes are created and monitored by the system so that when trucks arrive, goods receiving has the data, can register arrival and hand over a pager and transponder.

If necessary, vehicles can be redirected away from site or be held in a waiting zone until loading bays are clear, timing is right and other emerging priorities have been handled.

When it is the truck's turn, the pager beeps and the truck's

loading point is displayed.

Also, via the transponders each vehicle is automatically registered at its loading point, providing an exact record of start and finish times for unloading. Forwarders thus get better data on times needed for executing orders, while the plant gets smoothed supply provision and optimised resource utilisation.

In fact, SyncroSupply optimises the supply of material against long and medium term plans, as well as real time status information from ERP. It automatically synchronises capacities and responds to changing priorities, ensuring efficient JIT operations site-wide.

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48 hours ROI from staff scheduling

Cooper-Avon Tyres in Wiltshire says it got return on investment from its scheduling software in just two days – by eliminating conflicts with engineering staff rotas.

The firm runs 24/7 with 1,000 staff, and was finding paper-based scheduling impossible because of the need to rotate staff coverage.

So it turned to Visual Staff Scheduler Pro (VSS Pro), set up an account and paid £1,040 for a 10-user license, which came with a 90-day free trial. CMMS administrator Martin Beta says it was very simple.

Plant engineers quickly familiarised themselves with the software and now use it to track their hours, change shifts if necessary and book holidays. "The software is designed for non-technical people, which makes it accessible to all," comments Beta.

And he adds: "The positive impact is quite astonishing. Efficient workforce planning has also helped us to achieve a steady outlay of manufacture and reduced staff costs."

And the knock-on effect has been improved availability of key process equipment, resulting in better response to breakdowns and reduced production losses.

Indeed payback was almost instantaneous, since the cost of VSS Pro was equivalent to just four 12-hour shifts. Scheduling is now 90% accurate and is expected to reach 100% very soon, while production output is optimised.

"We never expected VSS Pro to improve efficiency so significantly," comments Beta.

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Hydraulic Projects gets real lift

Bespoke valves manufacturer Hydraulic Projects, based in Dawlish, Devon, expects to kiss goodbye to double entry keying, while ensuring data accuracy and reducing admin hours, when it goes live with an integrated ERP system.

The company has gone for an Infor Visual ERP system, aimed at SME manufacturers wanting the Microsoft .Net environment. It also expects that system to substantially reduce its stock inventory.

Hydraulic Projects engineers valves to-order for the general industry, mobile, agricultural and the construction sectors. It may be relatively small, but it's range of requirements, complexities and timeframes are no different to those of larger manufacturers.

Says financial director Elaine Slater: "Infor Visual's ERP and bill

of materials functionality will be major advantages for us. We have a complex system for building products to-order, so we needed a system to complement that.

"We also required a system that could aid us in accurately planning and forecasting stock. In addition, we wanted to move to a Windows-based solution, where we could have a nest of Windows open at the same time, rather than only having access to one at a time."

Hydraulic Projects used to use two separate systems – one for controlling stock and the other for scheduling the machine shop. That was a fundamental limitation – not only in terms of re-keying or data inaccuracy, but the lack of business-wide information visibility.

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