

## WAS IT WORTH THE EFFORT?

# Wisconsin Precision Casting's Business Software Experience Exposes Continuing Rewards

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is the second of two articles on Wisconsin Precision Casting's experience integrating a business software program. Part 1: AN ENTERPRISING STORY: How Wisconsin Precision Casting Integrated Its Business Software System (INCAST, July 2011, pp. 16-18)

There are a lot of times when people share great ideas, but never disclose what happens. For instance, "How did it really go? How are they reaping the benefits? What are the results?" Following up on last month's description of the journey into implementation of its business software system, this article will address and answer some of those imminent questions.

As Wisconsin Precision Casting (WPC) took the initial step to integrate its business software system, it was necessary to recognize the time it took to change the culture of the company and embrace new technology.

At some point the question had to be answered: "Does this system work?" Because the ERP (enterprise resource planning) system requires the discipline to do everything right the first time, resources were now in place that proved success. Seeing is believing, and attesting that the system does what it says it will do has helped the entire staff buy into it.

Oftentimes people ask, "Where is Wisconsin Precision Casting positioned today?" WPC has encompassed the belief that its integrated software system is the foundation for the operations of the company. Following the rules necessary to enforce that everything is done right the first time, has established efficient, consistent, and accurate practices throughout all areas of our organization.

New customers that come through and propose unique demands are no longer intimidating since we have gained an intimate knowledge of the software sys-

tem. When new clients request specific information, we know exactly how to get it. Although at times we may not be on the same page, we typically can show them that the system can answer their demands and meet their needs. Subsequently, the business software system has delivered the following rewarding benefits that have helped Wisconsin Precision Casting proceed down its continuous path for improvement:

### Reward #1: The "WOW" Factor

There is a lot to be said for the "Wow" factor. Employees take pride in showing customers and other foundries what they have done. It is impressive to see wireless touchscreen computers at every machine station in the shop. It sends a level of commitment to customers that Wisconsin Precision is dedicated to doing things right, and willing to empower employees by providing the necessary tools and information for them to do their jobs. Customers can see first-hand the quality which has developed within the organization because of its business software.

### Reward #2: New Technology Supports Continuous Improvement

Wisconsin Precision uses technology to help improve its process, not just for the sake of using it. Every time the company is approached with a new technological device, the question is "How can this be integrated into the current system?"

Computers, smart phones, tablet personal computers are constantly changing and progressing. As a company, we can recognize where we came from. In the beginning, black and white process sheets were printed and routed throughout the plant. Today, numerous thin clients are placed at every work center throughout the shop. Large television



Vice President Manufacturing Cliff Fischer uses a smart phone as a means of checking daily production schedules.

screens have also been placed in every department to depict departmental work schedules. Tablet personal computers are currently being tested to see if they withhold in the foundry environment as a means of data collection. Not only has it become more cost effective to purchase new technology, but a particularly strong relationship with the software vendor has resulted in their continuous help in integrating these new technologies.

### Reward #3: Meet Industry Standards

Many times a year, teams of audit personnel come through the shop, and a pervasive confidence is apparent throughout the staff that the inspection will go smoothly due to the ability to access everything needed at the click of a finger.

For example, our MSDS sheets are paperless, current, and easily accessible, meeting today's OSHA requirements. They are no longer out of date, stored in an old box. Because the system is accurate and consistent, there is no time wasted searching for stored documents. There are no reservations that the system will provide accurate information every time, because the system requires that you do it the same and the right way all the time.

### Reward #4: Lean Manufacturing

Wisconsin Precision Casting has adopted a "Lean Manufacturing" method throughout the office and manufacturing areas. The wireless thin clients have

eliminated excess waste. It is no longer necessary for separate people to do separate tasks. It is no longer necessary for employees to walk to and from their work stations in order to complete their job, which has also diminished time socializing. A tremendous improvement is evident in our non-value labor because employees are able to stay and conduct work at their machines.

There is also a soft savings as well: Employees have become more efficient because of the ability to provide the information to do their jobs right. The personal computers located in each work station have provided all the information employees need at the touch of a finger.

Simple improvements, such as counting parts, have helped eliminate waste as well. Formerly, mechanical counters were used to count parts; but now an application has been developed, using the business software, that does the job automatically. There's no more worry about our mechanical counters failing.

*“WPC has encompassed the belief that its integrated software system is the foundation for the operations of the company.”*

The amount of printed paper work has dropped dramatically, which has cut down on expenses. Paper use has been slashed from a skid of paper per month to two boxes of paper per month. Supply expenses associated with printing, such as printers, ink cartridges, and toner have also been declining due to the paperless system.

### **Reward #5: The Ability to Talk and Share Success Stories**

The greatest testament to success is the ability to talk and share success stories. It is helpful to go out and speak about experiences, as it helps the investment casting industry improve as a whole. It is

in our best interest to educate other foundries about our success, helping the industry to improve overall and keep jobs in the United States versus sending them overseas.

This experience has been and remains a continuous improvement path requiring constant re-evaluation and questioning: “Is there a better way to do it?” The business software system can help provide the answer, and a strong relationship with the software vendor can further enhance the software tools available.

Wisconsin Precision has seen firsthand that success breeds success. Once employees gained the confidence and trusted the business software system, everyone took appropriate measures to make sure things were done right the first time. Numerous improvements resulting from better data, helped to build a better system, better prepared to answer the question: Is there a better way to do it?

For Wisconsin Precision Casting, the answer was, and continues to be, an unqualified yes. Is it worth it? The results and rewards speak for themselves.



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