

# Modern management

**UK manufacturers who introduce production control software into their business to ease the burden on scheduling and estimating usually find there are many other benefits. Steed Webzell reports**

**M**any companies prioritise their investment in high tech production equipment to make manufacturing processes more efficient but good production management is also essential if the business is to be successful.

Production control software continues to evolve as additional functionality is demanded. One of the software suppliers responding to this challenge is PSL Datatrack. This month the company will introduce version 3.5.1 of its production control software which includes Status Board, PSL Datatrack's innovative method for displaying factory status in real time.

One machining company already

benefiting from PSL Datatrack software is WML Engineering in south west Wales. Owner and managing director Jason Meir comments: "Status Board is just one feature developed by a company that knows its customers."

## EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION

A series of Status Board monitors stationed around his factory and in the office allow the Datatrack system to communicate information to those who need it, automatically and accurately.

Replacing a lone blackboard on the shopfloor, Status Boards mean that Mr Meir no longer has to run out several

times a day to communicate with factory staff. Messages are relayed instantly and machine operators can see what is coming, what is needed and what has been achieved.

Also president of the BTMA (British Turned Parts Manufacturers Association), Mr Meir has much to say about managing change and competitiveness in UK manufacturing. He puts much of his own success down to PSL DataTrack manufacturing and business software.

"At the start, we took the core Datatrack product to introduce the concept into our business. However, it quickly became clear that Datatrack had

## JETCAM MRP solution

JETCAM International's new MRP system is aimed at all types of manufacturing companies and is fully compatible with the company's CAM and nesting applications. It can provide tight integration or function as a standalone MRP solution.

All MRP modules are supplied as standard, covering estimates and quotations, stock control, materials traceability, bills of materials, sales order processing and invoicing, purchase order processing, works order processing, material requirements planning, master production scheduling, automatic progress chasing, operational performance monitoring, shopfloor capacity planning, shopfloor data capture, and key performance indicators and reporting.



*PSL Datatrack's new Status Board function is already in place at WML*



*ProgressPlus at Burcas is helping the company in its expanded sub-contracting activities*

so much more to offer, without a huge investment in training or familiarisation.”

WML added functionality such as estimating, which has revitalised the way WML handles its sales operation, and the purchase invoice facility that integrates with WML's accounting package.

DataTrack has led to many benefits, some of them unexpected. Mr Meir points to an instant saving – made the week DataTrack was installed – where the system identified suitable stock for an urgent order so that an unnecessary purchase order could be cancelled. Almost daily savings have accrued since then, with more streamlined business functions working together to save time, keep stock at optimum levels, ensure jobs are executed in the most efficient order, maintain tooling and equipment, and keep customers happy.

### QUALITY AND TRACEABILITY

“Our automotive work increasingly depends on having the right accreditations and we value our TS16949 award very highly. Datatrack was instrumental in getting our quality systems and traceability to the required standard,” concludes Mr Meir.

Another engineering company gaining considerably from investment in production control software is Birmingham-based Burcas which is using ProgressPlus from Berkeley Miles. The company has traditionally supplied precision tooling, cutting tools and paper cutting knives. However, since 2001 it has

also focused on the aerospace and defence markets, specialising in the manufacture and sub-contract machining of critical components and precision tooling.

“As the company expanded into new markets we became acutely aware that we had to invest in production control software to allow us to continue to grow and remain competitive,” says quality manager Martyn Fearn. “ProgressPlus was the obvious choice due to its flexibility, robustness and ease of use.

“It has helped us improve as a business by giving full traceability throughout the life cycle of the production process,” he says. “The system has increased our operational efficiency and allowed us to grow our turnover by making us more streamlined, efficient and fully compliant with the AS/EN 9100 standard. Furthermore, ProgressPlus's ability to link up with SAGE 200 financial software allows us to see customer credit status on order entry and instantly view overall company profitability.”

Mike Novels, managing director of Preactor International, which boasts 2,000 customers in 64 countries, is well

equipped to give a global perspective: “Manufacturers are beginning to realise that to remain competitive they simply cannot continue to rely on spreadsheets for production planning and scheduling,” he says. “Global companies want a single solution across all their plants but recognise that they need local support for the implementation.”

Preactor's range of production planning solutions are also of interest to small to mid-sized enterprises. The latest release, version 10.1, includes increased speed of schedule generation, improvements in management of datasets, new Gantt chart printing features, new user plot configuration features and drill down reports.

### STANDALONE ESTIMATING

Estimating is typically a stand-alone function that many would like to automate. QuoteCam engineering software allows a business owner to see the real cost of manufacture and know precisely how much profit will be generated, says UK supplier ScotCAM.

All data entered refers to the cost of doing business such as machine rates, labour rates, materials purchases and so on. QuoteCam offers a work centre rates calculator that takes all aspects of machine tool costs into account such as finance charges, running costs, future value and maintenance charges. It also has a sophisticated but easy-to-use overhead burden rate calculator that correlates the overhead costs down to a simple hourly rate that is automatically included in the cost when quoting.

QuoteCam offers a large range of machine process simulators for milling, turning and so on, which predict machining time. Additionally, it will allow users to perform 'what if' scenarios. □

## Tricorn supports Concept

Tricorn Systems has agreed to take over the support and maintenance of the Concept MRP II/ERP suite from Innogistic Software. Colin Reardon, managing director, says: “As well as taking on responsibility for the support and maintenance of Concept, we will be looking to integrate some of the functionality into existing Tricorn products.”