

# Delivering Gopak's make to order manufacturing system

Gopak, a UK market leader in designing multifunctional furniture, has gone live with a new manufacturing system from supply chain IT provider, Balloon One. The system comprises SAP Business One with BEAS Manufacturing Basis to provide it with a fully integrated enterprise resource planning (ERP) and manufacturing planning solution.

Gopak's folding tables and benches are a favourite within school diners throughout the UK. The company also designs and manufactures lightweight staging systems and fixed leg products. To provide a true one-stop-shop service to its customers, Gopak supplies chairs from select third-party manufacturers. Therefore, it was essential that GoPak chose the best available system to support its complex requirements.

Managing Director at Gopak, Andrew Fieldwick, says: "Selecting an ERP system isn't an easy decision. We needed to know and understand the development path for the product and have confidence that it would receive investment from the software author to support future development. We had a good look at the market, homing in on 10 to 12 different systems initially. We sent each vendor an overview of our requirements and from their responses we were able to reduce the list to the three most suitable systems. The finalists were then invited in to meet us and demonstrate their products.

"We also wanted a good partner that would treat us as an important customer, one which we could build a personal and direct relationship with. That team would need to



understand and appreciate what we have to achieve as a make to order manufacturer."

## Why choose Balloon One?

"We've been able to establish a good rapport with Balloon One. The team is responsive to our needs and have delivered what we require to help drive our business forward. We're very happy and believe we should have a good long-term relationship with the company," says Andrew.

"The Balloon One team has helped us through the pain and upheaval of installing a much more complex and comprehensive business system. We are much better operationally than we were before and we can run the business without the need for paper."

***"The Balloon One Team is responsive to our needs and have delivered what we require to help drive our business forward." says Andrew Fieldwick, Gopak's Managing Director.***

## Centralising data

Gopak previously had to manage three different databases and used lots of separate spreadsheets for controlling different parts of its manufacturing process. For example, scrap was recorded onto a spreadsheet and this was reviewed outside of the manufacturing system.

"Balloon One has supplied us with a single database system that has all the management controls integrated within it.

Our e-commerce website will also benefit from this central database approach when we interface it with the software in 2014 to help manage and drive our online business," adds Andrew.

### **Automating from order to despatch**

The new system is already improving efficiency by automating each step from order to despatch.

"When we receive an order we are able to check on screen whether there is an existing 'business partner' record and if not we simply create one and enter the sales order. We can do this while talking to the customer. If the order is for one of our own products, the system generates a works order for the factory or if it's for chairs, for example, it will raise a purchase order and send it to our suppliers. It is simple and quick and provides an enhanced level of service to our customers," says Andrew.

### **Shopfloor visibility**

For make to order manufacturers it is important to know how much capacity is available on the shop floor. With Balloon One's system, Gopak managers have this information at their fingertips.

"The system shows us our manufacturing capacity, letting our staff know whether we have the space available in the factory to produce the orders. The system also runs our material requirements planning [MRP] function overnight, which looks through the orders and our component stocks. This creates the sub-works orders for the factory. There can be as many as 20 separate operations from cutting the extrusions to making the frames, cutting the laminate for the table tops, making the top assembly and putting the legs on the frames.

"Not only does the system do all this electronically, it also presents the information on shop floor terminals to the manufacturing teams in the factory. This is a big advancement on the paper works order lists we used prior to installing the new system," says Andrew.

### **Despatch and invoice**

Gopak also utilises the system in its pick and pack operation. The despatch area staff select

## Case Study



the products to make up each order and use the system to produce the delivery notes and despatch labels. They then run the manifest for its local Nightfreight courier and then the products are ready for shipping.

Once the products are ready for despatch, the office runs a very quick routine to raise the invoices and email them to their customers. This also informs the despatch team whether they need to hold back orders if payment has not been received before the order is dispatched for non-credit customers.

"What would take up to a day to do, now takes 10 minutes on average. All we need to do is run a simple software Wizard and the invoicing is done. This will allow us to use our resources for other things, such as proactive customer service. We've also got much more control in the despatch area as we can use the system to flag up that payment is required before we send out new orders," says Andrew.

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### **Live stock situation and improved scrap management**

With the new system, Gopak has a living picture of its stocks. The company can see component consumption in real-time. The other advantage of this is having instant knowledge of how much scrap the manufacturing process generates.

“We can see precisely how many of each component we hold in stock on screen in real-time. This presents us with a live stock situation, which is much more efficient for us. We are now introducing barcode scanners to help us record scrap. Each component will have its own barcode and we are developing a barcoded list of reasons for scrapping the items. This information will be used to generate a Crystal Report, which will help us to analyse our scrap output at any particular time.”



### **SQL makes it easy to query**

The system uses SQL (structured query language), a feature that enthuses Andrew.

“The real power of this system is that it is based on SQL. This allows you to create queries to interrogate the database. The more data we collect across the business and the more expert we become at creating and running queries, the more benefit we’ll get from the system. We see it as a very important tool to help us continually improve what we do across the business, from manufacturing, to customer service.”

