



Plastics Manufacturer Sets Higher Standards of Performance with Rapid ERP Implementation from IQMS

Pursuit of Excellence

With more than six decades of growth and achievement in plastics manufacturing, Flambeau, Inc. is unremitting in its pursuit of excellence. From W.R. Sauey's invention of a fishing lure in 1947, Flambeau has earned the reputation of being "a single source solution in plastic," providing a diverse range of products and services. These range from tooling design for injection and blow-molded thermoplastic components through contract manufacturing of complete assemblies. The privately held company generates \$250 million in revenue annually, and operates a number of its own product divisions, including Duncan® Toys, ArtBin® products, and Vlcek® floral containers. Flambeau, Inc. purchased two companies in the UK over eight years ago and consolidated them to form Flambeau EuroPlast Ltd.

A culture of teamwork, knowledge and excellence allows Flambeau EuroPlast to deliver innovation through committed effort and continuous improvement in all that it does. Yet as the company grew, its legacy systems hampered efforts to evolve leaner operations. Prior to 2008, EuroPlast relied on its parent company's material requirements planning (MRP) software for production planning and inventory control. This was coupled to a separate accounting software package for financial management because the UK company uses multiple currencies. Both the MRP and accounting systems ran on separate databases that did not interface well with each other. The effect was a patchwork solution that required the UK company to use spread sheets to manually track vital business information, often leading to errors in critical functions such as costing and inventory control.

"Credible management information was very difficult to acquire," explains Norman Buckett, Supply Chain Manager at Flambeau EuroPlast. "We were manually inputting data with no true visibility of the implications across our business. Key management information was often missing or difficult to validate as our data lacked integrity. This meant we had trouble identifying issues and correcting problems. Each month we saw significant variances, but we had no method within the system to identify the root cause on which to focus our improvement effort."

Driven to uphold its standard of excellence, Flambeau EuroPlast sought to replace its two-database systems with a single, comprehensive enterprise-wide solution. The company wanted a user-friendly, visual system that delivered the same real-time data for both production and financial management purposes. Tight assimilation between those areas was critical so that the company could better forecast costs and inventory needs, while driving greater efficiency on the shop floor. Flambeau, Inc. was also instrumental in the system selection process to ensure the chosen system had the future potential to be rolled out across the group.



The Company

Flambeau, Inc. brings plastic to life for thousands of businesses and millions of professionals, hobbyists, and enthusiasts worldwide. Founded in 1947, Flambeau has grown to encompass a diverse range of manufactured plastic products, including agricultural equipment and machinery, automotive parts, electronics, medical devices, toys, packaging solutions, and much more. The company employs thousands of associates and occupies over 1,400,000 square feet of production space with eight manufacturing locations worldwide, including U.S. facilities in Wisconsin, Indiana, Georgia, Ohio, California, and North Carolina, and operations in the UK and Mexico.

Single-Source Solution Delivers Significant Results

After an extensive review of competitive tenders, EnterpriseIQ -- the innovative, single-source enterprise software solution written, developed and supported by IQMS -- was selected. EnterpriseIQ provides a powerful and cohesive solution that meets the unique and varied requirements of industry specific manufacturers. Features such as a comprehensive financial management system, RealTime Machine Monitoring, regrind usage and consumption capabilities, multi-level bills of manufacture, and multi-tool and family-tool functionality sold Flambeau on EnterpriseIQ.

"We saw EnterpriseIQ as a best fit for us because IQMS has extensive experience in plastics," says Buckett. "Other vendor solutions were not as comprehensive and tailored to our business. We also liked that EnterpriseIQ operates on a single database. Now everyone in our company has the same, accurate real-time data at their fingertips."

Flambeau went live with EnterpriseIQ in April 2008 after a six-month implementation process. "Implementation went very smoothly," says Buckett. "As a company we recognized that we would also need to invest in training our employees on the system before taking it live. IQMS partnered with us to lay the ground work, and we got all of our people using the scanners and the system in test mode. We went live over the course of one weekend without experiencing any unexpected issues."

The company has since seen significant benefits on both the production and financial sides of its business. According to Buckett, the greatest improvement has been derived from using EnterpriseIQ RealTime Machine Monitoring along with the system's bar coding capabilities.

"RealTime and bar coding have brought a new level of structure and control to our business," explains Buckett. "RealTime lets us track production as parts are being made. This means we can drive optimal performance in the different cells of our manufacturing operation, but the benefit doesn't stop on the shop floor. EnterpriseIQ automatically updates every aspect of our business with the same data. So shop orders, schedules, finished product counts, and more all reflect instantly what happens in production."

Cost Savings through Inventory Reduction

One area where Flambeau has seen improvements is in inventory reduction. The company uses the EnterpriseIQ inventory module to control inventory and costs, and serialized bar coding and scanners to track jobs. Once a bar code label is activated, data pertaining to that job is scanned against the code throughout the production process. Each scan instantly updates all inventory-reliant areas of the business with real-time inventory information.

"Our inventory visibility is much better than it was before," says Buckett. "Bar coding asserts a discipline into the process that ensures accuracy. In the past, we used work orders with manual labels which relied on the label being filled out correctly. With EnterpriseIQ, data is hard coded within the system, so any problems can be traced easily, and customers' queries can be answered more readily."

Features within the EnterpriseIQ system such as lot number tracking, traceability, and serialized inventory control let Flambeau minimize the cost of its inventory. In addition, with RealTime the company can store, track and fulfill orders based on what is actually happening on the production floor.

Empowered from Shop Floor to Top Floor

As Buckett describes it, RealTime has cascaded out from being a business management tool to being a dynamic picture of the shop floor. Flambeau uses IQMS RealTime Machine Monitoring to observe individual machine performance. Color-coding indicates machine and job status as it happens, and provides immediate, visible communication directly between the shop floor and ERP scheduling module.

“With RealTime green means lean,” explains Buckett. “Shop-floor supervisors and anyone else looking at the screen can tell instantly whether their machines are running to standard, and move quickly to correct any problems when they aren’t. When we started with EnterpriseIQ, we lacked visibility of our operational performance. Now that this is visible in real time, quick actions can be made to correct all variances.”

Buckett says this improvement stems from the control RealTime affords shop floor personnel to make immediate adjustments if a machine cycle has slowed down.

“RealTime gives our shop floor employees ownership they did not have before,” says Buckett. “That’s gone a long way in improving the quality of our output. We used to make large batches because we weren’t confident in the fulfillment of the plan. But using EnterpriseIQ, we’ve reduced our batch size as much as 50 percent. Now we’re in line with our monthly requirements and we’re saving money in our material costs.”

The power of continuous communication with the shop floor delivers benefit to the whole business team. Flambeau uses the detailed scheduling modules to forecast sales and material requirements and the production data, gathered from RealTime, to track and report on costs and variances as they occur. All this information together helps to manage many other aspects of the accounting and finance side of its business.

“EnterpriseIQ has given us the true ability to manage our business down to much finer detail,” explains Michaela Stodart, Financial Controller at Flambeau. “With our old system in place, we were very much going on a gut feeling because we did not have access to real-time data. Now we can be more objective and proactive in our approach.”

Solid Foundation for Future Success

Flambeau EuroPlast’s move to EnterpriseIQ has given the company a good platform on which to move and expand its business.

“EnterpriseIQ has helped us set new standards in performance that we could have never achieved while using our old system,” says Stodart. “EnterpriseIQ literally captures every aspect of our business and puts it within easy reach. We can now take on new and more complex jobs with confidence, knowing we have the processes and procedures in place to ensure success.”

Flambeau will continue to reap benefits of the EnterpriseIQ system. In the future, the company plans to add Quality Management and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) modules from IQMS to the mix. But according to Buckett that’s all fine tuning for an investment that’s already proven its worth.

"Our investment in EnterpriseIQ has fulfilled our investment criteria," says Buckett. "We've achieved visibility and control over a very intricate set of operations, and we're now poised to set new standards of excellence into the future."

In Brief

Founded in 1947, Flambeau Inc. provides a diverse range of products and services from injection and blow-molded thermoplastic components to contract manufacturing of complete assemblies. The privately held company generates \$250 million in revenue annually, and operates a number of its own product divisions, including Duncan® Toys and ArtBin® products. Eight years ago, Flambeau purchased two companies in the UK and consolidated them to form Flambeau EuroPlast Ltd. With this growth, the company's enterprise operations were spread over a patchwork of solutions that did not interface well and required manual tracking of vital business information, which often lead to errors in costing and inventory control. For this reason, Flambeau replaced its legacy systems with EnterpriseIQ – the innovative, single-source enterprise software solution written, developed and supported by IQMS. EnterpriseIQ provides a powerful and cohesive solution that meets the unique and varied requirements of industry specific manufacturers. Features such as comprehensive financial management, RealTime Machine Monitoring, regrind usage and consumption capabilities, multi-level bills of manufacture, and multi-tool and family-tool functionality sold Flambeau on EnterpriseIQ. Using EnterpriseIQ, Flambeau has seen benefits such as: lower inventory costs; improved data accessibility; and greater visibility and control across multiple facilities and currencies. Because EnterpriseIQ gives Flambeau the ability to manage its business down to much finer detail, the company is now poised to expand its reach with confidence.

Return on Investment

- Six month implementation
- Gained visibility and control across the UK facility utilizing multiple currencies
- Increased data integrity and accessibility
- Empowered shop floor employees to operate lean
- Improved internal and customer communications
- Reduced inventory costs and improved overall costing accuracy
- Reduced required batch size by up to 50%
- Achieved greater efficiency on the shop floor

Software

EnterpriseIQ™ ERP software system with RealTime Machine Monitoring, Wireless Warehouse Management System (WMS), Fixed Assets Manager, Business Intelligence, ShopData modules, and more.

Hardware

Oracle database with windows-based PCs