SUCCESS FlexNet® STORY

Manufacturing Operations Flies High with FlexNet at Textron Systems

TEXTRON Systems

Customer Info

Name
Textron Systems Inc.

Industry
Aerospace & Defense

Employees
6,400 (2008)

Annual Sales
$2.1 Billion USD (2008)

Apriso Deployment
FlexNet Production
FlexNet Quality
FlexNet Labor

For more than 50 years, Textron Systems has been serving the defense, homeland security and aerospace communities by building systems, unmanned aircraft precision smart weapons, intelligent battlefield and surveillance systems, and armored vehicles. But global operations, recent acquisitions, aging Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems all complicated enterprise management of manufacturing operations. An easier, more cost effective solution was needed to run the business.

"We had many gaps to fill," said Tony DeGregorio, CIO at Textron Systems. "We looked to improve our efficiency on how we were tracking time and labor. We needed more consistent 24x7 systems availability." Textron Systems sought a solution to better integrate quality with production and material handling while expanding traceability and genealogy to address compliance requirements with the Department of Defense. Streamlined integration with their enterprise applications was a requirement, including systems from SAP, Oracle, PeopleSoft and many other shop floor systems.

A Platform for Manufacturing Operations Management

Textron Systems met these requirements by deploying Apriso's FlexNet as an enterprise platform for Manufacturing Operations Management, or MOM. Apriso delivers a single platform for managing and executing production and quality processes while providing seamless integration between ERP and best-of-breed shop floor, material handling and labor collection systems across four of Textron's global operating units.

"With FlexNet, we can now define, execute and manage process changes more efficiently," noted DeGregorio. "Once we have identified a best-practice, it can then be installed multiple times to maintain consistency, yet still be able to bend enough for local conditions. This helps us comply both with our own business methodology and regulatory compliance requirements."

In order to help streamline operations and cut costs, Textron Systems now uses FlexNet as a single point of access – as a portal – for their other manufacturing IT systems. "Our portal approach shields shop floor employees from overly complex transactions in other systems, such as our ERP, helping ensure local support," explained DeGregorio. Users are directed through FlexNet user interfaces to perform specific operational tasks relevant for their position and location within the plant.

Benefits Achieved:

- Three fold improvement in operations throughput
- Expanded traceability and genealogy while removing IT system's complexity
- Library of best practices drives global continuous improvement
- Digital time and attendance systems improved accuracy to reduce cost of regulatory compliance

Continuous Improvement to Operational Excellence

During roll-out, Textron Systems experienced several immediate benefits. "Our iterative, phased implementation provided an early opportunity for accumulating best practices, becoming a foundation for continuous improvement," commented DeGregorio. "We discovered highly effective ways to standardize labor and payroll processes, including how to start or stop labor with particular types of devices. We created a best-practices library to archive solutions, and can update them whenever necessary."

Their best-practices library supports multiple sites, operations, IT landscapes, diverse work cultures, varying levels of systems expertise, and both union and non-union shops. "Because best-practice solutions are not device-centric, we haven't had to swap out various labor collection devices, and do not run into difficulties as we add new equipment to our FlexNet solution. The same holds true with portability in other areas," said DeGregorio.

"We've seen as much as a three-fold improvement in transactional throughput. It's amazing when we look back at the number of transactions that strangled us back when we used legacy, homegrown systems. Thanks to FlexNet, most transactions are now executed in the background, and then flushed through ERP without an operator's knowledge — freeing workers to do their real job of building parts," said DeGregorio. Employee hours used to be tracked with paper and electronic timecards. Now all employees, whether hourly or salaried, use FlexNet as a digital time and attendance system for greater accuracy and cost-effective compliance with government audits.

Elevated Quality at a Lower Cost

Quality has also improved. "FlexNet provides real-time rendering of product data, work instructions and defect management information," noted DeGregorio. "Quality is paramount in an industry like ours, where troops' lives are at risk. Now we have total visibility into Work-In-Process on the shop floor. We have a complete genealogy of parts and serialization of lots, all accessible within the FlexNet portal, helping to drive down the cost of quality."

Streamlined IT and Change Control

Textron's Change Control Team now benefits from simplified business process changes, thanks to FlexNet. "Change control is huge for us, at both the local and enterprise levels. The team meets weekly to decide on changes. These go into our process 'Library' of best-practices. The same solution can then be deployed anywhere across the enterprise. If we want to extend the solution to other sites, the code is already there. The way FlexNet works is very slick," explained DeGregorio.

"FlexNet is a vital part of our strategy to stay current and consistent. It lets us maintain a common footprint, yet easily make adaptations for those plants with unique needs. It supports our Lean and Six Sigma initiatives, simplifies technical training, standardizes labor reporting and improves quality and efficiency across the board. All of these contribute, of course, to a very positive return on investment," concluded DeGregorio.

Learn more at www.apriso.com.