E2 shop system™ Success Story

Aerospace fabricator flies high with E2 software.

Davidson Fabrication helps keep the world's planes in flight. The family-owned business was founded by Jim Davidson in 1966 and today is run by a second generation. This Pennsylvania-based sheet metal fabricator works with some of the aerospace industry's biggest commercial and defense companies.

That's no small task. At any given time, Davidson is routing up to 400 jobs and parts through 7 different departments and working with numerous specialty contractors. To handle and monitor the workload, Davidson uses Shoptech's E2 software. Davidson contract administrator Kathy Koci says that E2 keeps the process rolling, and that Davidson wouldn't be able to effectively serve its customers without E2 in place.

E2 replaced legacy system that wasn't 'intelligent or interactive'

Up until 2009, Davidson had managed its workflow with a legacy system that was based in Microsoft Access. Koci said that the system was designed by the company's IT provider. While the system was effective enough at sorting and displaying information, Koci said it wasn't "intelligent or interactive." In other words, it could only provide a very narrow set of information – for a very limited number of users.

In addition to the Access database, Davidson used a set of Microsoft Word sheets to track a part as it moved through the fabrication process. As a part would go through each of Davidson's seven systems, the department operator would have to update the information on the part's sheet. Obviously, this was a very cumbersome and time-consuming process.

In 2007, Davidson purchased E2. However, the company didn't implement the system until 2009. Koci said, "We're procrastinators and change can be hard." She added that some at the company were reluctant to transition away from the old system, even though they recognized how ineffective it was.

That's not an uncommon problem. Many job shop owners and managers are reluctant to make that shift to a turnkey software solution that automates and integrates many of the myriad processes at work in a contract manufacturing operaiton. Koci said that, fortunately, Shoptech was extremely helpful in aiding the transition. She said they provided, for example, detailed screenshots to help those system users who weren't necessarily PC-proficient.

Koci also said that Davidson made the transition smoother by running parallel systems - the Access database and the E2 software - for a period of time. Running the two systems parallel allowed users to transition off the old system and ease into the new one.

'Wouldn't have been possible' without E2

Koci said that the switch to E2 back in 2009 proved to be timely. While much of the manufacturing industry was suffering through a faltering economy, Davidson's business was booming. She said that it "wouldn't have been possible" for Davidson to manage that growth and to handle their volume today without the E2 system.

She said that E2 allows Davidson to perform a few crucial tasks. First, using the **E2 Data Collection Module**, it allows Davidson to get a real-time view into their process and see where their parts and jobs are. That's important because Davidson has to outsource some functions to a variety of contractors. For work like special coatings and heat sealing, the parts are sent out. E2 gives Davidson to easily manage that process.

E2 also helps Davidson be more responsive to their customers' needs. Davidson fills many orders for customers on an "as-needed" basis. That means that a customer may order a few thousand parts, but may want them sent in batches as they need them. Davidson has to be prepared to fill any size order at any time to meet that need.

Better management, better quality

Koci has conference calls with customers every week to project the next 90 days and update them on the process of specific parts. She said that there's no way she would be able to provide that update if she didn't have E2 on her side. Before the transition to E2, Koci and other shop management personnel had to literally walk out to the shop, visit each department, and manually track each job's progress.

In addition, **E2's Quality Module**, which includes a proprietary Rapid Documentation System, streamlines how Davidson keeps up with and conforms with the aerospace industry's AS9100 quality management system. These audits are routinely performed and are critical to the exacting tolerances Davidson's end-users require.

Beyond being happy with the ERP functions of the base E2 system, which helps manage everything from quotes to shipments, and the upgraded add-on modules provide, Koci also added that they're more than pleased with Shoptech's service. She said that most calls to customer support are resolved on the very first phone call. Occasionally, Shoptech has to research the issue and call her back, but the issue never goes beyond two phone calls.

Koci and the rest of the Davidson team credit E2 with helping them better serve their aerospace customers. When asked what could be improved in E2, Koci responded, "The only way it could be any better is if it was able to read minds."

Our developers are working on that.

Shoptech Software

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