

The letters 'H B F' in a white, sans-serif font, positioned in the top left corner of the image, partially overlapping a dark grey rectangular area.

H B F



20-20 SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS COMPANY INSIGHT AT HBF

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by Rob Kirkbride

"You can look and see where you are at any given time," McVey said. "If you walked into our plant a year and a half ago compared to now, you wouldn't recognize it. The biggest change we've seen with inSight is speed. We are getting things out much faster than before. We can still look out and see where we want to be. We can see all the potential that we have." – Kevin McVey, vice president of finance and administration

HBF wanted to streamline its business -- from the dealer network, to production, to shipment and billing. The Hickory, NC, company turned to 20-20 Technologies for help. The software company better known for its space planning products like Giza, installed its Enterprise inSight system there.

And in the year it has been up and running, HBF has experienced a profound change in its ability to closely monitor every aspect of its business, down to the most minute detail, according to Kevin McVey, vice president of finance and administration.

"This has helped HBF bring more value to its customers," he said. "We felt we needed software as nimble and quick as HBF, something very flexible. So much of what we do at HBF is engineered to order, so we needed something that could provide detailed information about our operations."

The inSight software has been running at HBF for about a year and the company has noticed a big difference in its ability to track costs (all the way down to the individual machine on the shop floor), sort information and send it to the right person, in the right order and keep orders organized from the time raw wood enters the plant until the finished furniture is loaded on a truck.

Enterprise inSight is designed to help furniture makers run lean and broaden product offerings. It also can reduce costs and increase productivity by providing "the right information to the right person at the right time, in real time."

The software can help ensure order accuracy with a highly visual order entry system and real-time validation to make sure every order is right the first time. It also is designed to automate engineering, including routing steps, CNC machine codes, drawings, standard costing and purchasing demand. Factory managers can use inSight for real-time status updates to keep track of parts and to make sure the company is working on the right orders. The software also has integrated CAD/CAM so workers can run equipment continuously and maximize a company's machine assets.

In addition, inSight also integrates with 20-20's point of sale applications so users can connect the sale from dealer and designer to factory and customer.

The software is relatively easy to integrate, though it took HBF a bit longer because of its ownership transition from Furniture Brands International to HNI Corp. in 2008. That transition was happening at the same time that 20-20 was developing inSight for HBF. A lot of work has gone into customizing inSight for HBF. The two companies have worked closely implementing the system without causing interruptions for HBF's customers, said HBF President Charlie Bell. "20-20 has been a phenomenal partner," he said. "It didn't feel to us like a consultant-customer relationship. It was much more than that."

HBF worked closely with 20-20 Vice President Manufacturing Services Keith Garber to make the system work. "They now have the tools in place. This is where the payback comes for a system like this," he said.

"It is a credit to the joint team. All of us knew they could not have a business interruption. We created a total test environment here so we knew it would work before the change was made."

HBF suffered no such interruptions, McVey said. "Though we had a pretty strict project timeline, we made sure everything was tested to minimize the risk. There were no negative effects on our production."

With most of the hard work over, HBF is beginning to see real benefits. Simply put, the process is faster and there are fewer errors. The benefits reaped by HBF are turning into benefits for the company's customers too. Because of the level of information the company now collects, it is able to offer more customization options to its customers. Shipping is better controlled so no one on the loading dock is left wondering where the different pieces of the order are hiding. And HBF has leaned down its plant, eliminating many racks of parts that would sit unused until the order arrived. Most parts are now made as needed. "As we work with inSight, the benefits are moving to our customers," Bell said. "We are definitely feeling like we are seeing that now."

HBF uses most of the inSights tools, but not all of them. First 20-20 completes an extensive discovery process to understand the current state of a company's business. When inSight is installed, it is not about taking old business processes and replicating them. It really is about creating a new business system for the customer. At HBF, the first to transition to inSight was the company's order entry system. inSight also runs all of HBF's production and procurement operations.

Bell and McVey are closely guarding specific improvements, but they said operations are better executed from purchasing to manufacturing to shipping. The improvements are coming from all the data collected by inSight. For example, the company is easily and instantly able to track how much upholstery is used. That allows the company to track labor and machine costs and adjust production accordingly.

Signs of inSight running in HBF's plants can be found everywhere, from CNC machines cutting wood to upholstery storage.

"With this system (along with 20-20's range of products), you can do space planning and take your layout to order entry and product manufacturing seamlessly," Garber said. "You can take the order from the dealer through, engineering and the entire manufacturing process. It is really about the round trip here -- a total alignment of the business going in both directions." HBF was doing everything it is doing now before inSight came along, but it was happening at the end batching. The information was messy and incomplete. Now, the company gets a much more detailed report from top to bottom and can work quickly to make changes that improve its system.

"You can look and see where you are at any given time," McVey said. "If you walked into our plant a year and a half ago compared to now, you wouldn't recognize it. The biggest change we've seen with inSight is speed. We are getting things out much faster than before. We can still look out and see where we want to be. We can see all the potential that we have."