



2020 Customer Success Story

WB Manufacturing Goes Paperless on the Shop Floor

As business and product lines grew at WB Manufacturing, so did the complexity of managing the manufacturing plant, processes and materials. By implementing 2020 Insight, WB Manufacturing has a flexible solution to allow for increased throughput while reducing manual efforts required. The cabinet manufacturing operation is now paperless and completely managed by 2020 Insight, resulting in decreased production footprint and reduced product lead time from 4 weeks to 3-5 days.

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Over the past 20 years, WB Manufacturing (formerly Wisconsin Bench), has grown from 28 employees to over 130. During this time, they also expanded their product lines and plant size. Today, they produce everything from tops and panels, to lockers and casegoods, as well as educational furniture for the industrial, educational, office and health markets. They work out of a 200,000 square foot plant in Thorp, Wisconsin. As their business and product lines grew, so did the complexity of managing the manufacturing plant, processes and materials. To help better manage the production of cabinets for the healthcare and educational sectors, WB Manufacturing invested in 2020 Insight—a specialized manufacturing operations management (MOM) solution developed specifically for furniture manufacturers. 2020 Insight helps optimize every step of the operation, creating a seamless flow of information from sales order to shipment.

Getting to Market Faster

Since implementing 2020 Insight, WB Manufacturing has been able to increase their product throughput and reduce their lead time for new products. The industry average for order turnaround is approximately 4-6 weeks. WB Manufacturing is turning around orders in under one week. And they are doing this with a paperless system.

As Kent Barby, Casework Production Manager, WB Manufacturing notes, “Seeing really is believing. In our cabinet areas we have 6 different check points with big monitors that people can see from 30 to 40 feet away.” Production staff keeps up to date by seeing real-time status notifications on one of these monitors, and email notifications are triggered to the appropriate team members throughout the workflow so they are aware of the current status of production.

Each part is labeled and tracked individually as it goes through the required machining. This process allows for effective quality monitoring and quick fixes. If a part needs to be replaced, simply scan the label and it automatically goes back into the queue to be re-nested and remade throughout all the secondary machining processes, as well as such as edge banding, dowel insertion, etc.



Kent adds, “For many companies, a bad part can cause real trouble and cause a bit of scrambling to get the part remade. For us it is simple because we track the part and can easily recreate it without disrupting the process flow.” Tracking each part individually adds additional value as they are able to change the status of the whole cabinet as it changes to provide intelligence to the rest of production—very useful for assembly.

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The Difference Flexibility Can Make

WB Manufacturing has one engineer running programs for all of their production—creating programs for 8 CNC machines, including the bill of materials and routings. In 2014, they created over one million programs.

Configurable engineering models can be reused to support a wide range of product line catalogs and expand new offerings rapidly. 2020 Insight's engineering configurator automatically processes the engineering data and creates the CNC programs and specifications—so there is no programming required at the machine. Machine operators are only responsible for feeding the machines, and because they don't spend time programming, WB Manufacturing is able to manage four machines and the kitting & hardware placement stations with just three operators - compared to the typical one operator per machines plus one or two people dedicated to kitting and putting on hardware. Flexible design tools and automated manufacturing capabilities reduce the manual steps required and increases productivity.

A typical production process is to create a giant batch of parts for a cabinet, group them into large stacks of like parts, process them through the plant, and then break

them out to assemble them. But at WB Manufacturing, they typically cut in small batches of one to two cabinets as they manufacture many custom cabinets. The benefits of this method are that there are no standing pallets of parts taking up space, the time and labor needed to break out parts from the big stacks and put them into individual carts is reduced and it allows for assembling throughout the cutting and machining processes. With scanners and monitors on their forklifts, the operators can scan each step after assembly from pallet to warehouse to the delivery truck.

They have the flexibility to adapt the process easily for custom jobs or larger standard jobs. "We only build to demand and sort production orders accordingly. Typically we implement batch 1 production methods to meet our custom orders, and we can determine and adapt the throughput seamlessly with 2020 Insight," says Kent. "Lots of companies can't do small batch sizes, track them in software and run them efficiently. So we feel it's a competitive advantage." WB Manufacturing has increased their output without increasing their engineering overhead since the product configurator automates the manufacturing output.

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Why 2020 Insight

Change is never easy and sometimes takes hard work to get where you want to go. For WB Manufacturing, they had a clear business model of what they wanted to do, which is an important first step. After researching solutions available to help them achieve their goals, they decided on 2020 Insight.

2020 Insight is the only solution that combines an engineering system with an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) functionality plus shop floor control. “We see people struggling with a lot of things we overcame years ago. Why? Because they have an ERP system here and a design software there, and they are double-entering their orders to get the programs made—and then they may take it out of there and back into their ERP system to get their bills of materials to order everything—but then they go to the shop floor and they are lost, because there is no tracking on the shop floor.”

“Because 2020 Insight is a flexible system, if you want to do something, there is usually a way to get it done in the software,” said Kent. Kent and his team make their manufacturing process look simple, but it took an investment of time and resources to get it where it is today—increased cabinet manufacturing throughput and decreased production footprint. This was possible because of WB Manufacturing’s clear vision for the future, their dedication to excellence and the successful implementation of 2020 Insight.

