"Six months after the implementation, stock reliability increased from 70-80% to 96% and is still rising."

ANDRE VOSKES | PROJECT LEAD

Brabant Alucast

Brabant Alucast increases stock reliability with Shopfloor Automation System.

At a glance...

Industry
Manufacturing

Application
Shopfloor Automation

Environment
Microsoft Dynamics AX

Brabant Alucast International, based in Oss, Netherlands, was originally a family business but has now been part of Volvo for many years and has expanded strongly internationally. During this early period, the company specialized in moulding and in CNC operations and assembly. When the automotive industry turned the focus on core-design and assembly, the company became autonomous and continued under the name, Brabant Alucast International, which now owns seven factories world-wide of which three are in the Netherlands. The company supplies car engines, car engine parts and body parts to most of the major automotive manufacturers.

The Challenge

Until recently, the factories in Oss and Heijen worked with an old legacy ERP system from their association with Volvo. On the shop floor, they were only slightly automated. The fork truck drivers used to record all dislocated stock on paper and their logistics department processed the information manually into the computer system. This process was prone to clerical and typing errors with poor hand writing from some colleagues adding to the problem. "These problems all slowed down our processes tremendously", says Andre Voskes. To ensure accurate stock records, Brabant Alucast had to perform a manual stock check every month. In most cases, the outcome was unpredictable which usually lead to frustration. If you have more stock than expected, it costs the company a lot of money. If you have less stock than expected, the problem is much larger because the automotive industry has very tight restrictions when it comes to delivery times and accuracy.

The internal processes at Brabant Alucast have 5 stages. Positioning of incoming raw materials and other incoming goods, injection moulding, temporary storage of materials and the storage of completed products. In three different locations there are three different kinds of stock. If there are any stock errors of inbound raw materials, all of the stages following will be affected by these errors.

The Solution

It was obvious the implementation of Microsoft Dynamics AX should be accompanied with the introduction of barcode scanning to reduce errors. After three conversations with three different companies, Actemium was chosen as the best solution. "Actemium knew our processes and knew what was important for a company like ours and it was obvious they had a lot of experience in scanning solutions. Actemium gave me a lot of confidence in this project from the very first moment."

The middleware Actemium worked with, RFgen, cooperates with all of the major ERP software systems. It doesn't make any difference which ERP solution is implemented. "I do think our implementation may have been easier because we only use the standard AX solution and we preferred to change our processes to fit the application rather than to build a lot of customization on AX."

Two people from Actemium and two people from Brabant Alucast started the project. Andre Voskes and Chris Jansen already knew what processes they required. "We didn't ask everyone for their opinion as this would have created too many new processes."

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We were short on time as we wanted the project to go live in four months", tells Voskes.

The implementation went well and was continually on schedule. Because there were going to be many changes for the staff, Brabant Alucast decided not to change the mode of operation of the logistic departments. They also decided to keep the stock in the same place. "We also kept the system flexible to have the option to make more improvements in the future, with more options to optimize processes even further. We didn't want to do everything at once and that's why we used barcodes with stickers which are easy to remove. On some locations the barcodes were worn away after six months but this had already been taken into account."

We trained our staff near Christmas. According to Voskes, "We gave our fork truck drivers the scanners and said 'go and play with it'. They learned to work with it very fast and were very enthusiastic. Besides, writing wasn't their strongest side which held up the old process. Now with the scanners, they can continue their work without any problems."

The Result

The first Monday of the new year, Dynamics AX and scanning went live. An exciting moment which fortunately went without any major problems. "We did have some minor problems, such as printing problems, but scanning went well from the first moment. Of course we ran into some small issues along the way with settings that weren't in the right position, but that was the only problem we had. Actemium told us, "if AX can process it, we can scan it. That's exactly right. If we wanted things differently anything was possible."

Six months after the implementation, stock reliability increased from 70 - 80 percent to 96 percent and is still rising. Voskes added, "We now need one less full time employee in the logistics department because we don't have to transfer the stock information from paper to the computer system. We also need one less full time employee in the finance department because we don't have to sort the invoices anymore. The fork truck drivers are also very enthusiastic and don't want to go back to the old processes."

Brabant Alucast is now ready for the future. At the moment only internal logistics uses bar code scanning. Andre Voskes says it won't be long until the whole business is integrated and our suppliers and buyers will be working with barcodes. Until recently Utopia was a dream but now there is a possibility it will become reality says Andre Voskes. A stock reliability of 100% is now realistic.

About RFgen Software

Incorporated in 1995, California-based RFgen Software provides flexible and reliable mobile supply chain solutions that solve real-world business challenges. As a certified Oracle, SAP, Microsoft, Deltek and Vocollect partner, RFgen actively seeks companies facing challenges managing their internal supply chain operations and solves them using real-world experience, industry best practices, and state-of-the-art technology. RFgen's Mobile Framework division specializes in development tools for mobile, wireless and voice environments and provides open standards based connectivity to a multitude of systems (database, SOA, legacy, etc.). RFgen's ERP Integration division focuses on providing certified, open-source transactions and integration expertise for Oracle E-Business Suite, Oracle JD Edwards, SAP, Deltek Costpoint and Microsoft Dynamics solutions.

RFgen's Mobile Framework is an open systems development platform that speeds the path from idea, to proof-of-concept, to solution deployment. RFgen provides built-in, native functionality for extending real-time and on-demand access to enterprise data to almost any mobile device available today. RFgen's Mobile Solutions are currently installed in more than 35 countries, in over 2,600 locations, and are supported by a certified group of over 125 solution partners.

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