



Customer Profile

AIS streamlines processes with Infor SyteLine



Facts at a glance

Product: Infor SyteLine

Industry: Manufacturing & Distribution

Country: USA

"Infor SyteLine gave us the top-of-the-line capabilities we needed at a low total cost of ownership."

**—Al Yost, President,
Advanced Input Systems**

About the company

Advanced Input Systems (AIS) is a leading designer and manufacturer of application specific input devices for original equipment manufacturers in several industries, including medical, electronics, and defense. Operating within the Interface Technologies Group of Esterline Corporation (NYSE/ESL, www.esterline.com), a leading specialty manufacturer serving aerospace/defense markets, AIS provides end-to-end solutions with a complex product range and low cost of ownership to more than 300 companies worldwide. AIS supports a diverse range of projects including financial market trading terminals, medical imaging systems, land-based military vehicles, and secure encrypted communications. The company is headquartered in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, in the Pacific Northwest of the US. 350 employees work in a world-class, ISO 9001:2000-certified, 85,000-square foot manufacturing center.

Setting the strategy

AIS needed to upgrade its enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution, replacing a 17-year-old system that had been highly customized with a new-generation ERP solution that would help it meet current and long-term business needs. Its legacy system was presenting numerous challenges for AIS. "One of the big drivers for getting a new ERP solution was the risk we faced because our platform was nearly 20 years old and no longer supported," explains Al Yost, president, Advanced Input Systems. "In addition, our business had changed over the years, and this meant we needed a system with advanced capabilities that would be easy to use and maintain." The new solution would need to support an extremely complex manufacturing environment, where there are more than 1,000 jobs in process at any time and where as much as 25% of the company's product line must be replaced each year.

"We ship about 2,000 highly customized products each year, maybe a couple hundred each week that are different," Yost says. "Since each part has only one customer, there aren't standard products that we're shipping to multiple customers. Our value to customers is in our ability to be responsive and to be an extension of their business, whether it's in the design phase or in production," Yost says, adding that the efficiency of AIS's highly trained manufacturing employees is essential for the company to be successful. Production employees must set up a new product to be produced as many as 10 times a day. The new solution, therefore, would have to feature a modern graphical user interface (GUI) that would entice employees to use it. In addition, it would have to be a stable platform using industry-standard technology that would be supported by a vendor committed to continually improving the solution as AIS business requirements changed.

Getting business specific

After a careful evaluation, AIS chose Infor™ SyteLine as its solution because it is an adaptive, scalable system that offers the business-specific capabilities the company needed. “Infor SyteLine was the best solution for AIS because it gave us the top-of-the-line capabilities we needed at a low total cost of ownership,” Yost says. The application met the company’s requirement that its ERP solution be based on a Microsoft® platform with a server-based back end and a SQL infrastructure. The solution easily met AIS’s requirements for multisite capability to support other facilities within the Interface Technologies Group.

Infor SyteLine offered the capabilities to automate the numerous paper-based processes and provided the modern GUI that employees would be comfortable using. In addition, because it is compatible with Microsoft technology, AIS could easily find knowledgeable resources to help with implementation and in performing ongoing business processes.

Of the 350 employees working at the AIS facility in Coeur d’Alene, more than 150 are currently using Infor SyteLine to support several business processes, including customer management, vendor management, inventory management, bill of materials, job costing, and a number of financial and reporting processes.

Seeing results

AIS completed the implementation of Infor SyteLine in six months, leveraging a combination of internal skills, Infor experts, and an external project manager. “Because Infor’s solution uses industry standard technology as the building blocks, our team could easily and quickly get up to speed during the implementation,” says Mark Beach, IT manager, Advanced Input Systems. “Since we’re now on a stable platform that’s using industry-standard technologies like SQL, we’re more willing to invest in refining our internal processes like reporting and data management.” The response from employees has been very positive.

“With the old system, many employees avoided using the system, but with Infor SyteLine it’s a completely different story, thanks in large part to the user interface and overall ease of use,” Yost says. “Infor SyteLine has given more of our people access to more useful data,” he explains, noting that the training provided by Infor was a major factor in rolling out the solution. “In the previous system, maybe one or two people could do a certain business function, but now we have as many as 150 people who can take care of that task. That’s a big improvement.” With Infor SyteLine, AIS has streamlined several processes and, as a result, has achieved tangible business benefits.

“For example,” Yost says, “we’ve had efficiency gains in many areas such as accounting. With Infor’s application, our finance department can now fully close the books after each month in only three days, a significant improvement over the two weeks it took with our former system.” AIS is leveraging the Infor software’s location management, materials movement, and cycle counting capabilities to achieve and maintain 98% inventory accuracy. In addition, the vendor and order management capabilities have significantly helped with the workload of buyers.

“Prior to the Infor SyteLine implementation, our buyers were spending 80% of their time on tactical activities and 20% on strategic,” says Bob Lee, director of materials, Advanced Input Systems. “After we implemented the Infor solution, they are now able to spend 40% of their time on strategic activities—double of what it was before.” In addition to the specific business improvements, Yost notes that the company’s overriding objective was achieved.

“Our number one objective was met because we have averted the business risk that we had from our legacy system,” Yost says. “The Infor SyteLine solution is scalable and supported by Infor, so we’ll be able to use it for a long time.”

Doing business better

AIS plans to expand its use of the functionality included in Infor SyteLine beyond the ERP and customer relationship management capabilities that it currently uses. For example, AIS intends to more fully utilize the data collection capabilities in the solution.

Since 25% of its production materials are set up on Kanban, AIS will use Infor SyteLine functionality to barcode the Kanban cards and use data collection as products move within the facility.



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