



Customer Profile

CGR Products boosts response times with Infor M3



Facts at a glance

Solution: ERP

Product: Infor M3

Industry: Industrial Manufacturing

Country: US

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CGR Products**

About the company

Since its beginnings in 1963 as Carolina Gasket and Rubber Company, CGR Products has been the primary provider of customized flexible fabrication solutions for the industrial original equipment manufacturer (OEM) market. CGR Products cuts, slits, laminates, skives, and molds flexible, non-metallic materials into precision components at its facilities in North Carolina, Alabama, and Wisconsin. With experienced personnel, high capabilities, and financial strength, CGR Products efficiently fabricates flexible materials and strives to attain fast responsiveness in all transactions with customers and suppliers so that doing business with the company is fast and easy. To learn more, visit www.cgrproducts.com.

Setting the strategy

Proud of its successful 50-year history and its family-oriented culture, CGR Products also prides itself on looking ahead. The company makes precision product components for large customers such as Honda, Black & Decker, Square D, and Thomas Built Bus, as well as other companies across a range of market segments like automotive, electronics, HVAC, medical equipment, rail, tires, and the military. Handling 10,000 orders per year, CGR Products stays alert for possible new acquisitions, such as its October 2012 purchase of a Wisconsin-based gasket and sealing product manufacturer (which primarily served small engine companies). This acquisition expanded the company to 130 employees in three states, and aligned with CGR Products' strategy of satisfying customers who require precision products and quick turnaround times.

An Infor™ M3 user since 2001, CGR Products compared Infor M3 with another enterprise resource planning (ERP) system that was already in use at the Wisconsin facility. CGR Products chose to stay with Infor M3 because of its ongoing innovation and high performance. "I rely on Infor M3," says Steve Bartlett, CGR Products' IT manager, who worked his way up through the ranks of the company since joining in 1986. "It helped us increase productivity and allows us to respond quickly to our customers. It's also a strong foundation for the growth we're likely to continue to have through acquisition."

Getting business specific

In the late 1990s with Y2K looming, CGR Products knew it was time to make a change from its old ERP system, which didn't offer the power and integration capabilities the company wanted. That's when CGR Products selected Infor M3 (formerly known as Lawson M3). When M3 was implemented in 2001, the business drivers were the need to improve accounting processes, and integrate production planning and other manufacturing processes across its large repetitive manufacturing facility. While Infor M3's advanced production-planning capabilities were most attractive to CGR Products, the company was also impressed with many of the system's other capabilities as well.

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"We knew then that M3 was the product of a financially sound company with a strong commitment to R&D," says Bartlett. "And today, that commitment is still there with Infor. Whatever we can think about, they've also thought about. The overall package continues to evolve to meet our needs."

According to Bartlett, CGR Products is also greatly pleased with Infor's commitment to product research and development (R&D). This means that Infor M3 will continue to gain new capabilities that meet the challenges a competitive manufacturing firm like CGR Products must face today and tomorrow. One such example is Infor Mashup Designer, which not only allowed CGR Products to customize screens for its users in a way the company never thought possible a decade ago, it also helped the company make impressive gains in productivity and customer responsiveness.

Over the years, CGR Products periodically assessed whether to upgrade its M3 system, and decided to do so in 2011. Bartlett explains: "We are an ROI-driven company. We looked at the mashup and the barcoding capabilities, and saw how they were going to save us steps and clicks enough to justify the cost of the upgrade and deliver a return on our investment in 18 months. We saw then that upgrading was a no-brainer."

Seeing results

CGR Products recently gave new meaning to the acronym that has defined it for half a century.

"The new phrase for CGR is cut costs, grow sales, and be responsive," says Bartlett. "These are things that differentiate us from our competition." As he describes it, Infor M3 is a partner in that mission, and reduced number of clicks for employees is one way that CGR Products measures how the mission is being accomplished.

"Infor M3 is highly configurable. That's the thing I like most about the mashup capability. You can individualize it to each user," says Bartlett.

"By personalizing screens and settings so everything an operator needs is pulled into one view, we save considerable time and effort." For example, sales and customer service representatives can look at one screen while they have a customer on the phone and see the item master list, check on any open orders, review raw materials on hand, and see other vital information.

"Saving clicks in this day and time is crucial," Bartlett claims. He compares what's happening in the workplace today with "microwave syndrome," in which an item once thought to bring unprecedented speed to food preparation, nowadays can't seem to work fast enough. "Everything has to move faster today. Infor M3's mashup capabilities allow us to navigate the system more easily and help us deliver answers more quickly to our customers. With its mashup capability, Infor M3 has made us faster and more responsive—which is what our customers expect from us."

CGR Products is one of the first Infor clients to use Infor M3's mashup capability. "I'm very excited about it," says Bartlett. The mashup capability effectively turns the ERP system into interconnecting blocks that can be used to build new structures—which is precisely what Bartlett is doing. The mashups pull information together from several sources, display selected fields from different panels within a program, and combine this data with other data—all on one screen.

Bartlett avoids time-consuming and costly detailed programming to accomplish these goals. As IT manager, he's responsible for creating the mashup screens and pushing them out to qualified users. Besides sales and customer service representatives, accounting and product development employees also use custom screens created by Bartlett. "The one for product development is especially helpful," he states. "It's an item review that shows product structure and raw materials, cost, and the last time the raw material was updated. This used to involve several screens that product developers had to click between. But now all the details are presented in one view. It's similar to the customer service item review, but it's a little more specific to the item itself."

Bartlett appreciates how Infor M3 has helped him perform his job. For example, the 2011 upgrade from version 7.1 to 10.1 was accomplished over a weekend. That experience gives him confidence that the implementation at the new Wisconsin facility will go well, too. "We have a great team and the people at Infor work well with us. We'll be pulling data from a different ERP system, but it's SQL-based, so I feel very confident it will be a smooth process." He also likes the continuity Infor provides—the same team that helped with the 2011 upgrade will be on hand for the Wisconsin implementation, which is projected to go live in September 2013.

The system in Wisconsin has a document archive foundation module as an add-on. Bartlett is impressed with the module and plans to add it to CGR Products' Infor M3 system, company-wide. "It's a good program, and a must-have for their operations," he says. "It will make us more responsive because it will be easier for the people on the floor to use. We currently have an archiving system outside of Infor M3, so this will eliminate another extra step for us."

With Infor M3 in place, CGR Products has documented improvements in key performance indicators (KPIs), such as:

- **Correctly entered customer orders:** Since January 2012, the percentage of correctly entered customer orders has grown from 93% to 98.6%—a good indicator that timeliness and customer service have improved at an already efficient organization.
- **Orders entered the same day:** From the March 2010-March 2011 period to the March 2012-March 2013 period, orders entered the same day have increased from 93.5% to 97.1% of all orders. As of when this document was published, the average of 10,000 orders per year does not include the Wisconsin facility.

Doing business better

CGR Products is actively reviewing Infor's customer relationship management (CRM) solution to replace its existing CRM solution and integrate quoting, estimating, and costing all in one step—another growth strategy.

"We are in acquisition mode," says Bartlett. "We're actively seeking other possibilities for growth." He knows Infor M3 is the right system for a company in this mode. "In looking at what Infor M3 has to offer and the growth we're expecting to have, I have confidence that Infor M3 is the right system for us." Though not global yet, CGR Products will be open to future consideration of acquisitions in Mexico and Canada.

Bartlett believes that Infor M3 is an ideal complement to his background as production manager, before he moved to IT. "I understand the logical aspects of how we work, and have helped apply Infor M3 to those aspects to make us more efficient and productive. And I appreciate how it works for us without requiring extensive programming. Infor M3 does what I need it to do. That's the bottom line."



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