



Relevant Business Systems has supported Harvard's EMS business and their aggressive strategy for growth and profitability for nine years.

Harvard Custom Manufacturing

ERP system provides agile, scalable, robust support for the specialized needs of Aerospace and Defense contractors

Summary

Harvard Custom Manufacturing has driven impressive growth, even in the years of declining military budgets, via "competitive pricing, high quality, and on-time delivery". Harvard was able to adhere to these business tenets in part through the superior control afforded by an agile, scalable, and robust ERP system. Relevant Business Systems has supported Harvard's EMS business and their aggressive strategy for growth and profitability for nine years, seamlessly and rapidly integrating acquired facilities and providing headache-free performance in existing facilities.

Customer Profile

Harvard Custom Manufacturing (HCM) is a leading Contract Electronic Manufacturer currently operating two facilities to manufacture and test complex "box" and panel, printed circuit board, and cable/harness assemblies. Their customer base spans the telecommunications, networking, medical, aviation, computer, industrial, and the military electronics industries. Their work for Department of Defense prime contractors, however, initially shaped the business and continues to drive much of its culture, business processes, and software application demands.

HCM was founded in 1994 through a management buyout of Northrop Grumman's operations in Salisbury, MD. They started out with minimal sales, 60 employees, and the conviction that rapid growth

would follow. HCM has grown both organically and through acquisition. Part of HCM's strategy has been to acquire customer-dedicated and/or labor-only facilities, convert them to full turnkey, dramatically increase their sales, and further integrate into them HCM or profitably divest them. By 2000, HCM was operating facilities in California, Texas, New York, and Maryland, employed over 900 people and supported sales in excess of \$250 million. Harvard ran the same ERP system in all facilities. HCM's strategy of acquisition, turn around and integration/divestiture has required agility on the part of management and their software support.

Business Requirements

Nine years ago, when Harvard Custom Manufacturing was spun out of Northrop Grumman, Harvard's management faced an immediate dilemma. The spin out was to be a clean break; HCM's management team knew they'd leave the building on Friday evening as Northrop employees and show up on Monday to run an independent business – a business unsupported by Northrop's home grown, legacy systems. HCM wouldn't even be able to effectively take orders until they had new software in place. At the time, a typical ERP installation could take over 15 months – time Harvard could not afford.

In addition to an extremely tight timetable, Harvard had other critical system requirements. Most of their products were manufactured to mil-spec, making superior

component/part number traceability essential. Job cost tracking and change order control were also critical to their build-to-order and revision-intensive business. Lastly, HCM was looking for a scalable system, supported by a strong customer service team that could deliver rapid installation of a product with a proven track record in defense-oriented businesses.

The Solution

Relevant Business System's "Accelerated Implementation Program" fit the bill for HCM's implementation timetable. From the date of the software purchase to up-and-running took six weeks. Marc Renick, Vice President of HCM's Salisbury business unit states "We thought this was possible because we were so small back then, but the HCM/Relevant

team repeated their six-week performance in 1997, when we purchased Atlantic Design, an Ogden Corporation company with sales in the millions. We were able to convert from Atlantic's legacy system to Relevant in the same six weeks, despite the larger size and greater complexity of the business."

According to Tony Rodriguez, currently Corporate Director of Operations and a member of the original implementation team, HCM picked the Relevant system because it better addressed key needs of manufacturing for the military, *without customization*. Standard functionality included:

- Project Control – which enabled HCM to run the business by project number, audit against project and plan and analyze by project.

- Engineering Control – provided the ability to control by Rev level, critical to a business that often finds itself providing low and medium volume complex assemblies that go through many revisions over the life of a part number.

- Cost Control – allowed HCM to roll up average actual cost by project.

Nine years later, Rodriguez remains convinced they made the right choice: "We haven't needed to add a single module. Relevant fit our needs very well then, and it still does today."

Perhaps even more telling, Marc Renick states, "I'm hard pressed to remember an issue with the software or any software-related downtime."