



**Louiseville Specialty Products:
Teamwork allows ERP software to be implemented in record time**

Louiseville Specialty Products is a company of eighty employees that specializes in the manufacturing of fibreboard panels. After being bought by the Cascades Group, the company's management needed new management software because IT support would no longer be available after the end of their fiscal year. Their project team leaders therefore developed specifications for each sector's required functionalities, and this allowed them to precisely determine which firm's software would fit their needs.

After meeting with different companies to see how each would measure up to the task, our reasonably priced Orchestra Solution for SME really stood out from the competition. Louiseville's managers then decided to test the software with company data to simulate how the product would function in their work environment and determine what customizations would be needed.

The contract was awarded four and a half months before Louiseville's fiscal year end. We needed to ensure that the accounting module and most of the manufacturing management module functionalities would be operational a month beforehand so that the new application would be ready before the next fiscal year began.

Even though Auger Groupe Conseil and our consulting firm could have incurred penalties for missing the set deadlines, Mr. Jacques Trahan, Project Manager for Auger Groupe Conseil, decided together with the software provider Concepts Industriels 2000 that it was worth the risk: "This was a calculated risk on our part, as we had confidence not only in our team and our expertise, but also in the skills of our client and their team leaders, especially after the series of meetings that led to our winning the contract."

A very aggressive implementation timetable was established and agreed upon by all team members. Not only was the implementation deadline half of the normal amount of time for a project such as this, there were other constraints as well:

- Implementation during fiscal year end;
- The client's internal team leader only available part-time;
- Very high production period during the implementation process;
- Implementation in two separate companies;
- A lot of custom work due to the type of operations (continuous process);
- Need for process review during implementation since the deadline was very tight.

During the first implementation meeting, each team member committed in writing to meet the agreed-upon deadline for their part of the project. The implementation plan was essentially carried out in the following steps:

- The management team was trained on manufacturing management.
- Practical training was given on the manufacturing management module.
- Individual team members were coached on the functionalities they were responsible for.

The initial training was necessary to see how each team member was involved in the system and to make everyone aware of the importance of having access to all information in real time so that they could benefit from up-to-date reports and data. It has also been proven that users better appreciate software systems that they understand. This group training was therefore given to those responsible for production and accounting, as well as human resources, shipping, accounts payable, and equipment maintenance.

Although the company simplified certain processes from writing project specifications, many opportunities for improvement arose during training and were implemented during system configuration and individual coaching. As a result, the implementation process allowed us to confirm the needs of users and of their internal clients.

To ensure adequate functioning, team members had to use the old and new software at the same time, which gave most team members additional work loads for about one month. But by doing this, users quickly grasped how easy the new interface was to use compared with the old application. During this stage, Auger Groupe Conseil's team configured functions and reports to gain optimum efficiency.

On the production side, the scheduling system included in the software, although very powerful for standard production, did not optimize planning in the context of continuous process manufacturing. The system was therefore adapted specifically to Louiseville's needs so that an entire month's production could be planned in just a few minutes.

To ensure there was no problem entering production data, the internal implementation leader, Mr. Robert Auger, made a particular effort to involve production personnel when defining the parameters to be entered into the system. After many changes to the data entry screen, employees were so happy with the new interface that they forgot to use the old application, which then complicated the validation of output data.

The software implementation was also performed at the same time at Louiseville's sister company, Convermat, who uses some of Louiseville's finished products. Once implementation was complete, company president Ms. Rina McGuire only had praise for the final results: "With Orchestra, I finally have the system I've always dreamed of."

When the old software system finally went offline at fiscal year end, Louiseville's decision to go with Auger Groupe Conseil and the Orchestra software paid off. Not only did we meet the deadline, we also increased the efficiency of their administrative tasks with real-time follow-up that allows for quick problem solving. We also increased staff motivation due to their satisfaction with the software and the success of the project.

The team leaders were also appreciative of the ease of use, flexibility and adaptability of the product:

“The SME accounting software was adapted to our particular accounting needs. A lot of manual tasks were eliminated during implementation, which was easily carried out because of the software’s user friendliness. It is so flexible, we will always be able to get the information we want, even if our needs change in the future.”

Ms. Patricia Baril, Controller

“It is great how versatile and high-quality this system is. The Auger Groupe Conseil team applied their skills very well to adapt and configure the software to suit our needs. Quick access to operational data, order management functions, and the planning grid makes my work a lot easier.”

Mr. Mario Brisson, Manager

“I always wanted software that would allow us to build on the basic platform and that was flexible enough to adapt to our company instead of the other way around. Production demands were met, and for managers, the real-time display of product status and traceability were important features.”

Mr. Robert Auger, IT Supervisor

It was only once the project was finished and the implementation deemed a success that our team realized what we had accomplished. Now that the basic system is working, the implementation of the bar-code and equipment maintenance management modules can proceed at a less hectic pace. Although the failure rate for implementing manufacturing management systems is high, Louiseville Specialized Materials and Auger Groupe Conseil proved that team work, the right expertise and software, along with an action plan that is rigorously followed-up by internal managers are essential ingredients for this kind of project—a project that so many companies must carry out if they are to succeed.