

PSSI Case Study: Union Products International, Inc.



Wire harness manufacturer delivers more units with fewer errors in less time — and keeps it simple — with ALERE Manufacturing from PSSI...

We like to “keep it simple.” That statement, spoken by **Pam Reed**, Vice President of Operations for Cromwell, Indiana based **Union Products International, Inc.** aptly sum up the whole experience that is Union Products: simple, frugal and effective.

An office tour of this international manufacturer of wired electronic components for office systems furniture quickly confirms that philosophy. Notes are posted instructing the last person out at night on the steps required to save energy. Another by the thermostat advises opening the door before turning down the A/C. And despite great success, the company deliberately chose to scale back operations in order to preserve workplace harmony and ensure that everyone feels both comfortable and appreciated in the work environment.

It’s the kind of place where employees often count their tenure in decades, not years. Where morale and efficiency and “quality of life” issues matter as much as anything else. And where in a burst of festive creativity, the company cafeteria, which sometimes doubles as a conference room, is decorated in a 1950’s style that looks like a set from ‘Happy Days’ and where employees can enjoy a free lunch.

Pam’s no-nonsense, keep it simple style plays well on the factory floor, and in her choice of factory automation software. When it comes to managing the shop floor, production, raw material and inventory, Union Products has relied for years on TIW Technologies’ **ALERE Manufacturing** (formerly “WorkShop”) factory management system.

Pam points out key benefits that include improved management of raw material inventory. And Vice President of Manufacturing **Doris Fletcher** adds, “The system has eliminated purchasing pressures. We can *plan* now.” As builders of wire harnesses for the office furniture industry, and an OEM to large

manufacturers, Union Products “is often the bottom of the food chain. We are expected to carry the inventory,” says Doris. Thus, it is critical that Union Products have a good handle on purchasing, materials and inventory. And with ALERE Manufacturing, they have that and more.

“We especially like the fact that we can use as much or as little of the program as we want,” says Doris. And as Pam notes, “We can have just one operation step — Build Something — and by keeping it that simple, we can still manage inventory with precise accuracy.”

The company manages hundreds of BOMs, but *carefully*. The result is an efficient manufacturing operation, from orders to routing and from bills of material to production, that has resulted in on-time accuracy of “between 98% and 100% — at least that’s what the customers tell us,” says Reed. “We win a lot of awards for that,” she adds modestly.

As further manifestation of the Keep It Simple mantra, most staff are cross-trained to do more than one job, and they use the system to manage with increased flexibility. As both Pam and Doris noted, “We would need a lot more people on our staff today if we did not have this system.” And over time, they add, the software has become even more flexible. “We looked at several options, but with ALERE, we were just so much more flexible, and we could use what we wanted, when we wanted,” says VP Reed.

The bottom line result: this very successful firm is “way more efficient” according to Fletcher. “We produce more, with fewer errors, in less time. And we catch the rare mistake sooner.”

“We make it work for us,” is the simple way Pam summarizes it. “We’ve never required a whole lot of training and support, though PSSI has always been there for us when we needed them.”

Next up for Union Products? A likely integration of manufacturing with the newer ALERE Accounting companion modules. But only if it keeps things simple, of course. ■

“We would need a lot more people on our staff today if we did not have this system.”

– Doris Fletcher, Vice President, Manufacturing, Union Products Int’l, Inc.



Productivity Strategies & Solutions, Inc.
6561 Lonewolf Dr., Suite 200
South Bend, IN 46628
Phone: 574-239-2444
Toll Free: 877-273-2444
Fax: 574-239-8915
www.pssiusa.com

ALERE Manufacturing (formerly known as “WorkShop”) is an integrated manufacturing and accounting solution for the small to mid-size factory. The system is deployed at thousands of firms nationwide. PSSI has been implementing this robust factory management system for over 15 years for manufacturers across the Midwest. As an authorized partner, we help clients deploy effective business and manufacturing management solutions on-time and on-budget.