Case Study:

It's All About the Data

Learn how WessDel's journey to efficiency was rooted in data accuracy and driven by Harmoni.

HARMONI

WessDel

How can you run your shop efficiently without accurate data?

This was the hypothetical question posed by Jeff McKay, VP at WessDel, Inc., a machine shop focused on complex components and assemblies based in San Jose, CA. And when we say complex, we really mean complex - in addition to traditional aerospace and defense components, WessDel manufactures specialized satellite components made of titanium and beryllium alloys and utilizes its' in-house brazing capabilities to form highly complex assemblies.
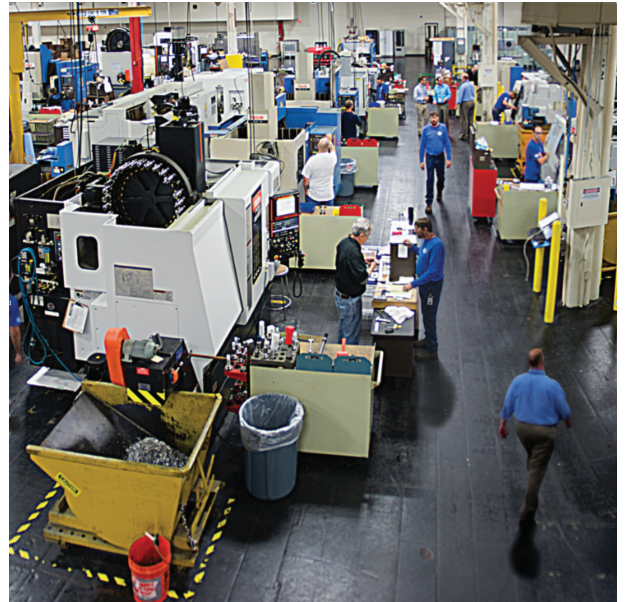
While these specialized capabilities attracted many of the largest OEMs in the industry to do business with WessDel, they proved to be a challenge to manage efficiently. Even with industry-leading ERP software (WessDel runs EPICOR Kinetic), there remained a significant data gap between what was actually happening on the shop floor and what the ERP system thought was happening based on time charging activity. With this data informing all management decisions, from production scheduling to capacity planning to quoting, this was a problem. The more operators were asked to track their time, the more inefficiencies were introduced. It was quite the catch-22.

In an effort to address the issue, WessDel tried installing a machine monitoring system to get a handle on machine activity. However, this required operators enter their time twice — once in the ERP system and once in the machine monitoring system — introducing even more inefficiencies.

There must be a better way.

"When I was brought on board at WessDel, my mandate was to improve operations. As an engineer, I was relying on data to tell me where the problems are, and how to fix them. And our data was, let's just say - not perfect. I knew that cleaning up that data was going to be a big job, so I set out looking for solutions to help."

Jeff McKay
VP, WessDel

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When WessDel reached out to Harmoni, they were ahead of the game - because they appreciated the need for data accuracy and were already looking for a solution to address the issue. But it was the out-of-the-box efficiency gains that really impressed the WessDel team.

In most shops, operators use shared terminals to conduct ERP transactions, whether clocking in and out for the day, clocking in and out for lunch, or changing over jobs during the day. With Harmoni, operators do these transactions right at their machines, with RFID-enabled automation. WessDel conducted time studies on exactly how much time would be saved and determined that Harmoni would be generating a net return just from this. And that's before accounting for the data accuracy, scrap savings, and numerous other benefits that would result.

The installation at WessDel was completed in less than a week. Operators were trained and clocking in at their machines instead of using the shared ERP terminals. This provided an immediate efficiency benefit, which was a key milestone for WessDel in their Harmoni implementation roadmap.

Within the first few months, WessDel rolled out additional features, such as work instructions, program loading, and digital checksheets. Most importantly, and in line with their original goal, they used Harmoni to understand cycle times and clean up their data.

And Jeff now has the data he needs.

"We conducted time studies, and on average it was taking operators 11 minutes to complete every ERP transaction. With each operator doing this many times throughout the day, the potential to turn this wasted time into productive time was enormous."

Jeff McKay
VP, WessDel

"I was impressed by how easy the Harmoni system was to install. They had no issues communicating with machines, new and old - and it was seamlessly working with EPICOR out of the box. The technology is amazing!"

Bob Dorricott
President & Owner,
WessDel

WessDel was up and running with Harmoni in less than a week.

The Results

With no upfront costs to implement Harmoni, WessDel immediately realized a significant ROI. By taking a time tracking process that previously took 11 minutes per transaction down to seconds, WessDel **gained 17 productive hours per employee per month** while achieving the data accuracy they needed to run their shop better, resulting in an ongoing benefit of over 5X the ongoing cost of the Harmoni system. However, the real benefit was yet to come.

The addition of Harmoni was a major piece in a larger initiative to update and modernize WessDel's ERP and MES systems. This effort included both hardware and software improvements as well as a restructuring to focus attention on both frontend operations as well as manufacturing excellence. The results of all these efforts have shown a significant improvement in productivity throughout the shop and reduced delinquent jobs by more than 10%. These improvements not only reduce the need for overtime to catch up on late jobs but also improves overall customer perception and satisfaction data. As Harmoni adds features and capabilities, WessDel will be able to gather more data and employ it for continuous improvement efforts to realize further productivity gains.

WessDel's journey with Harmoni continues to yield value as they roll out additional areas of functionality. But it all started with the desire for clean data, and this data has led to better decision-making across the organization.

"We are very happy with our decision to implement Harmoni at WessDel. The benefits that have resulted from it permeate the organization - and we now use it as the primary tool to manage our factory. Even operators love using it, they appreciate the automation."
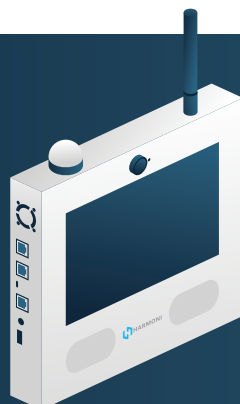
Bob Dorricott
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