



CASE STUDY

Formica achieves business transformation in record time with Infor MES deployment

Formica Group is the world's largest manufacturer of high pressure laminate (HPL). It supplies branded, designed and surfacing solutions for commercial and residential customers worldwide. Applications of Formica products are everywhere, from kitchen worktops and fire doors, to exterior façades and interior wall panels, and many more besides. The Formica Group of companies operates 15 manufacturing sites in the USA, Canada, and Europe.



Industry

Industrial Manufacturing

Infor product

Infor® MES

Locations

15 manufacturing sites globally

Website

www.formica.com

“ Infor MES is opening doors on opportunities for improvement projects which were unthinkable in the past when we had a manual system in place.”

CHRIS DAVIES
European IT Director

Formica Group is the world's largest manufacturer of high pressure laminate (HPL). In order to improve make-to-order competitiveness and to drive up customer satisfaction, Formica Group went on a business transformation journey that required the roll-out of new business systems.

In Europe, for the management of shop floor operations, Formica selected Infor MES.

Challenges of make-to-order in HPL manufacturing

The HPL manufacturing process comprises four steps: treatment, collation, pressing, and finishing. At each step of the process, inventory of semi-finished goods is created. Some inventory is immediately used in the next process step, whilst some is entered into stock. Finished products are packed and labelled, then entered into stock or shipped to customers.

Formica makes tens of thousands of HPL products. Due to the large number of references, WIP stock accuracy is critical in the make-to-order use case. In order to improve make-to-order competitiveness and to drive up customer satisfaction, Formica Group went on a business transformation journey that required the roll-out of new business systems.

Infor MES at Formica

After an initial feasibility study, Formica identified Infor MES as one of the possible contenders and asked both shortlisted providers to assess requirements, and produce a proof of concept.

"The results were compelling for Infor," commented Chris Davies, European IT Director. "Even though they had had far less exposure to our requirements, the functionalities of their software Infor MES combined with Infor's ability to understand our business process and turn around a credible demonstration won the decision over."

Business challenges

- Deliver a user-friendly front-end to Formica's ERP
- Maintain high WIP stock accuracy in make-to-order use cases
- Launch as quickly as possible, with the ability to expand to CPL processes
- Allow Formica to adopt a single standard system to manage production

Inventory control and management

Initially, Formica had planned for Infor MES to simply deliver a user-friendly front-end to the ERP and address exclusively inventory management requirements.

Infor MES' initial requirements were to:

- Download production orders from the ERP
- Track work orders at each of the four steps of the process, i.e. treatment, collation, pressing, finishing
- Create, manage, and track inventory of finished and semi-finished goods using mobile scanners, thus supporting the packing, moving around the shop floor, consumption on the lines, and unpacking
- Confirm inventory of finished and semi-finished goods back to the ERP

However, as the project progressed in the design phase, the Formica team realised that Infor MES could deliver more than they had initially planned and made the decision to expand the scope of the MES to include scheduling.

"The roll-out of the new ERP provided an opportunity for Formica Europe to find and adopt a single standard system to manage production, i.e. to get a manufacturing execution system (MES)," explained Chris Davies.

Planning go-live and roll-out in record time

Within a month, Infor MES was deployed at the same time as the ERP in North Shields (UK) and Valencia (Spain), then 4 months later in Kolho (Finland), and finally, in Newton Aycliff (UK), four months after that.

Operators adopted the systems universally and quickly because it made their work so much easier.

Integrating another manufacturing process in the same MES model

Just one year after the deployment in North Shields, and seeing the benefits made by MES in day-to-day operations, Formica considered how to implement the MES at the Quillian factory in France. This site manufactures the plating tools to create the surface finish on laminated sheets.

This is a very different process from HPL, with many more operations to make new tools and refurbish old. There was a need for a simple solution where Formica could track WIP materials through the numerous operations.

Infor was able to integrate this requirement easily in the Formica MES Factory Model, allowing mobile scanners on the shop floor to scan the progress of each tool as it moves from one operation to the next.

Business results

90%

success rate on delivery targets

200

operators across European plants currently using Infor MES

5

plants running Infor MES within a 12-month period

Delivery targets met over 90% of the time

Formica has gained in agility and resilience and has achieved its goal to improve customer satisfaction efficiently. Formica is now achieving on-time delivery targets over 90% of the time, and the MES plays a key role in this. Infor MES also delivers:

- A user-friendly front-end for operators to record activities and support the process
- Live accurate data to the ERP
- Great WIP stock accuracy, providing confidence in stock levels and ensuring that all press orders can be fulfilled according to the schedule
- A central place for all the manufacturing data, making it available for reporting and analysis

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