

**EPICOR®**

# Focused on Growth

Epicor Manufacturing  
Customer Success Stories





300 PSI

MADE IN USA 2-1/2" ASTM A-

WHEEL



# Manufacturing

Epicor provides innovative solutions that enable the manufacturing process, from planning and procurement to costing, scheduling, production, financials and more. Our solutions go beyond traditional ERP, encompassing customer relationship management, business intelligence and e-commerce. Most important, Epicor manufacturing solutions seamlessly manage complex requirements such as configure-to-order plus repetitive requirements such as make-to-stock, offering versatility that supports a truly mixed-mode manufacturing environment. For mid to large sized organizations with a local, regional, or global presence, Epicor Manufacturing is a powerful solution which delivers greater business agility through a flexible service-oriented architecture (SOA). Epicor for Manufacturing is used within thousands of companies around the world. The following pages include just a few of our many success stories.



“We wanted a system that could bring it all together and help us better communicate across functional areas within the enterprise. Epicor was the best fit for our company and the way we operate.”

Michelle de la Vega,  
Business Applications Manager  
Cold Jet, Inc.

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# ACE Clearwater Enterprises

## Industry

Sheet Metal Fabricating

## Headquarters

Torrance, CA

## Employees

180 Employees

## Epicor solution

Epicor Vantage

## Business Challenge

Antiquated ERP system could not provide timely information access to keep up with accelerated pace of manufacturing business

## Solution

Flexible, all-in-one solution that gathers data and distributes it throughout the company in real-time

## Business Benefits

- Better, faster decision-making through improved visibility
- User-friendly installation, upgrades and maintenance
- Improved supply chain management
- Reduced dependence on paperwork

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**“Since we started running Vantage 8, the biggest benefit we have experienced is the ability to gather real-time data and rapidly transfer it to our users for analysis and decision-making.”**

— King Lum  
Director of Progress  
ACE Clearwater Enterprises (ACE)

ACE Clearwater Enterprises (ACE) is a family-owned manufacturer of sheet metal products, specializing in complex formed and welded assemblies for the aerospace, automotive, and power-generation industries. Notable customers include Honeywell, Lockheed Martin, GE, Bell Helicopter, Boeing, and several foreign aerospace companies.

Prior to Vantage, ACE used a legacy UNIX-based ERP system with other databases running in the background. King Lum, director of progress at ACE, says this often caused user problems and wasted time transferring data between applications. And because it was a "store and forward" system, the data was not real-time.

Lum is in his eleventh year at ACE and says customers are expecting faster turnaround times every year. Through vertical integration, ACE streamlined its production cycle by bringing new equipment and processes in-house. But that was just the beginning.

ACE quickly realized they needed a flexible, integrated system that could aggregate and distribute real-time data to users across the entire company for analysis and decision-making. It also had to fit ACE's business environment and offer user-friendly installation, upgrades and maintenance, and a lower total cost of ownership and simpler overall system administration.

Lum said Epicor's excellent reputation was also important. "We knew Epicor would stand behind its product and continue to implement new features and innovations." Epicor Vantage 8, the industry's first manufacturing software solution based on a 100-percent service-oriented architecture (SOA), best satisfied ACE's criteria.

### Smooth Implementation

To plan the implementation, eight three-person process teams were formed, including operations, purchasing, contracts and accounting. Training was conducted at all three facilities on a team-by-team basis.

Converting the databases was the most time-consuming step. ACE's programmer coordinated the data transfer with team leads and worked with an Epicor consultant to fine-tune configurations within Vantage. The week before conversion, the teams inventoried and collected open orders from the shop floors. System data was downloaded on Wednesday, verified on Thursday, and uploaded into the new Vantage system on the Friday before the Memorial Day weekend.

Teams worked on Saturday and Sunday to recreate all open orders, completing the conversion process by Sunday afternoon and leaving Memorial Day free for parades and barbecues. On Tuesday morning, ACE was off and running on Vantage 8.

### User-Friendly and Responsive

"We've found Vantage 8 to be easy to learn and very user-friendly," notes Lum, adding that the applications and clients are easy to install, upgrade and maintain.

Using ACE's existing Windows platform and TCP/IP infrastructure eliminates the need for propriety hardware and infrastructure. "Vantage 8 is a solid product, built on the Microsoft .NET platform from the ground up—it's very responsive," says Lum.

"Very responsive" is also how Lum describes Epicor's tech support. "They are the best I've experienced in the industry." ACE uses Vantage throughout the entire company, with 50 users and 20 bar code sessions.

Because Vantage is based on the .NET platform, ACE users now share information across applications with analytical tools, which Lum calls "a tremendous time-saving benefit." Reports can be easily modified and special business activity queries (BAQ) written to deliver real-time data to ACE users. For ACE's purchasing staff, Lum says Vantage reports and BAQs give them critical information and optimal visibility in managing the company's supply chain.

### Less Paper-Pushing, More Visibility

The integrated Vantage solution means less paper-pushing, a goal ACE first established five years ago. For example, Vantage gives ACE online, real-time visibility of contract review requirements for ISO quality certification. Previously, paper was shuffled between separate tracking systems and databases. Furthermore, quality documentation is now incorporated directly into Vantage, rather than ACE personnel recording bad parts on separate paper forms.

Lum says part traceability is very important to ACE customers, particularly in the aerospace industry. "The lot-tracing capabilities within Vantage help accelerate that process.

"Customers today also want immediate visibility on the status of their orders—they don't want to wait," Lum says. ACE plans to offer its customers Web-interface capabilities in the near future, through Vantage's Web service capabilities, states Lum, "This will be another competitive advantage."

# Cold Jet, LLC

## Industry

Dry Ice Blasting

## Headquarters

Loveland, Ohio

## Employees

100 Employees

## Epicor solution

Epicor Vantage

## Business Challenge

Old systems not interconnected (production, accounting, and engineering), California plant (an acquisition) used different, non-interconnected systems, needed multi-site and multi-national capabilities

## Solution

Comprehensive enterprise-wide solution that brings all areas of the company together and provides solid tools for managing inventory, production, engineering, finance, and customer service

## Business Benefits

- Better coordination between departments and locations
- Eliminated messy and error-prone weekly data uploads and conversions
- Customer documentation in desired language and currency
- Improved business performance—inventory reduction, receivables collection, service coordination and billing, warranty tracking

**“We have better control of our inventory and now that engineering is on board there’s better coordination between engineering, production and purchasing. Vantage has brought these teams together.”**

— Michelle de la Vega,  
Business Applications Manager  
Cold Jet, LLC

Cold Jet, LLC is the pioneer in the research and development of dry ice blasting and dry ice production technology, setting the standard for quality, performance and reliability in the field. Founded in 1986 on the idea of creating cost-effective, environmentally responsible and technologically advanced dry ice solutions, Cold Jet’s solutions are an effective and cost-effective way for many industries to maximize production capability and quality.

For removing the residue from rubber or plastic molds, cleaning soot or mold from buildings after a fire or flood, paint removal, general cleaning or industrial blast-type cleaning, dry ice blasting offers an environmentally friendly, efficient, and powerful alternative to sand blasting, bead blasting or soda blasting. Dry ice is frozen carbon dioxide, a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas found naturally in our atmosphere. The ice media sublimates (evaporate) on contact with the surface being cleaned so there is no residue left behind as with the other types of blast cleaning.

Cold Jet dry ice blasting equipment is used in Aerospace (Boeing, Lockheed Martin, General Electric Aircraft Engine, Pratt & Whitney), Automotive (Bridgestone, Delphi, Johnson Controls, Lear), Electrical (DuPont, Duracell, Fujitsu), Disaster Restoration (Disaster One, ServiceMaster, ServPro), Food and Beverage (Anheuser Busch, Frito Lay, Hershey, Keebler, Kraft, Miller Brewing, Nabisco, Quaker Oats), General Maintenance, Foundry, Historical Restoration, Packaging, Plastics, Printing, Rubber, Wood, and other industries.

From its base in southern Ohio, Cold Jet leads its industry with technological developments in dry ice production and processing, system portability, and efficiency. In 2003, however, the company found itself with a disconnected array of systems for inventory and production, sales, finance, and the California plant, which used different information systems implemented when the plant belonged to a competitor. Weekly updates between production and accounting systems proved time consuming and fraught with errors. Something had to be done.

With the help and advice of a consultant, Cold Jet evaluated several alternatives and selected Epicor Vantage to be the one repository of all the company's information. "We wanted a system that could bring it all together and help us better communicate across functional areas within the enterprise," says Michelle de la Vega, Cold Jet's Business Applications Manager. "Vantage was the best fit for our company and the way we operate."

### Multi-site, multi-company, multi-currency

One of the most important requirements was the ability to handle multi-company, multi-site, and multi-currency needs. "We're not that big of a company," de la Vega explains, "but we have a lot of the same needs of larger multi-national companies. We have customers around the world and we have three companies, multiple plants and multiple sales and support locations. These capabilities are very important to us."

Since going live, Cold Jet has seen dramatic improvement in the availability of information and the level of coordination and cooperation between departments. "We have better control of our inventory and now that engineering is on board there's better coordination between engineering, production and purchasing. Vantage has brought the teams together." There are direct, measurable benefits as well: inventory days-on-hand is down from 135 days to around 77 days, and receivables days-outstanding has been cut from 53 days to about 45, for example.

The company is particularly pleased with the improvements in customer service. Using the field service module, they are now able to really manage customer contracts and warranty work. They know what units are installed where (by model and serial number) and the service history of each unit, and can easily quote on service requests and track costs and billing. Customers are also pleased with the multi-currency and multi-language capabilities of the system "Our customers in Germany want their documentation in German and want their invoices in Euros, not U.S. Dollars. Our Canadian customers don't want to be billed in U.S. Dollars either. Vantage handles these translations and conversions with ease," de la Vega says. "In addition, we used to have someone spend an average of two hours a day just producing the international shipping documentation. Now it's auto-generated by the Vantage shipping module."

### Many Happy Returns

Returned materials offer another great example. "We issue an RMA (Return Material Authorization) and track the items as they come back to us, through the inspection and repair or disposition, and all the costs and activities associated with it. There's some extra work (updating the system) but everyone involved now really appreciates the tremendous benefits we gained, knowing where everything is and what's happening to it and being able to track the costs and availability."

Since upgrading to Vantage 8 and SQL-server database in 2006, Cold Jet is finding even more ease and capabilities of their system. Leveraging Microsoft .NET and Web services technology, Vantage 8 features a 100% service-oriented architecture (SOA) offering new levels of application reliability, scalability, system interoperability and flexibility, combined with a rich user experience and low total cost of ownership.

"We are about to do a mass price list update," de la Vega explains. "Before we would have to do a complicated upload procedure or load pages and pages of data by hand," with the new SQL server database, they can bring the new prices into the system directly from the spreadsheet they used to develop the pricing.

Overall, Cold Jet is very glad that they have Vantage to bring the varied interests of the company together. "Vantage does a great job of bringing all these aspects of our company together into one database. We are much more coordinated between departments now and work together better than before."

# Prince Industries, Inc.

## Industry

Precision machining and fabrication

## Headquarters

Carol Stream, IL

## Employees

250 Employees

## Epicor solution

Epicor Vantage

## Business Challenge

Existing jobshop software was ill-equipped to handle growing complexity of jobs for precision machining and manufacturing company with international operations

## Solution

Complete manufacturing system for mixed-mode production, with integrated workflow processes and international capabilities, specifically Chinese language translation

## Business Benefits

- Ability to manage and track complex, multi-stage production
- Real-time access to job costing and profitability data
- Full visibility for shop-floor personnel; easy “drill down” to information
- Improved communication between U.S. headquarters and Chinese facility
- Accelerated month-end accounting by approximately 25 percent
- Capture profitability information in real-time

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**“With Vantage we can now examine jobs faster, dissect them more closely and capture profitability information in real-time. Vantage helps us analyze the best mix of business, what is the most profitable and why.”**

— Dave Miller,  
Systems Administrator  
Prince Industries, Inc.

“Our full-service capabilities provide a competitive advantage,” says Dave Miller, systems administrator with Prince Industries. Prince, based in Carol Stream, Illinois, specializes in precision machining and sheet metal fabrication.

Miller says milling, turning, grinding, honing, value-added assembly, and sheet metal and welded fabrication are all handled under one roof, the company’s 64,000-square-foot headquarters facility with 200 employees.

“We don’t subcontract any of this work, so we can push jobs through quickly,” notes Miller. As an example, Miller cites their work for a recreation customer, where Prince both machines and fabricates components before welding them together.

Customers span many other industries, too, including agricultural and industrial equipment, medical technology, recreation products and telecommunications. Currently the customer base is primarily domestic, with the majority located around the Chicago area.

“For our largest customer, a heavy equipment manufacturer, we make value-added assemblies ranging from 100 to 200 components, both machined and purchased by us,” explains Miller. These hydraulic-based controllers, operated like a video game joystick, are assembled and tested at Prince’s Illinois facility before shipment to the customer’s factory for final assembly.

Another significant customer makes dental instruments, and Prince machines stainless steel handles for handheld dental tools as well as various extrusions for larger x-ray equipment.

### Evolving into Global Manufacturer

“Our jobs keep getting more complicated and we wanted a software solution that we could grow with,” explains Miller. “Vantage definitely fit those criteria.”

Miller says Prince’s previous software package was more jobshop oriented, unable to support the company’s evolution into a global manufacturer of more complex products.

In 2002, Prince opened a 25,000-square-foot facility in Shanghai, China—a proactive, strategic decision to offer its customers a competitive alternative for high-volume production.

“As our customers are shifting production to China, we want to be there supplying them,” explains Miller, who joined Prince in 1988. The Shanghai facility currently has 50 employees.

While researching software, Miller said Prince personnel made site visits and phone calls to other users, even speaking with competitors. From a membership survey by the Precision Machined Products Association (PMPA.org), Miller knew that many of Prince’s competitors were already having success with Vantage. Because Prince’s first software system was from DCD, a predecessor company to Epicor, Miller said his company also had some familiarity with elements of the system.

“I’ve been watching different software companies over the years, and Epicor impressed me for always being on the move, continually improving its products,” says Miller.

For the Shanghai facility, the availability of a Chinese-language version was also a big advantage.

### Streamlining International Communications

For international operations, Vantage also has brought measurable improvements and better communication. The Shanghai database is hosted in Illinois, with remote access enabling information to be shared immediately. Previously, data was exchanged via e-mailed spreadsheets. “Vantage enables us to easily take the pulse of their operations,” explains Miller.

“The system is still pretty new to our Chinese colleagues, and it’s wonderful to have Vantage available in their native language. With our previous software, it was too difficult for them to understand the terminology.”

From a purchasing standpoint, Prince considers the Shanghai facility a separate organization, complete with purchase orders and invoices. “They’re able to look at open orders, and we can see what shipments they’ve made,” explains Miller. “Vantage makes it easier to share information.”

### Empowering Employees with Information

Prince selected Vantage in July began implementation in August and went live in January. “We’re very pleased with how well everything worked out, thanks in part to a strong effort by our core team,” notes Miller.

Prince also uses Vantage CRM, an integrated customer relationship management (CRM) module that enables sophisticated tracking and contact management through advanced collaboration and group sharing. Having a CRM solution directly integrated with the core Vantage manufacturing system has proven successful for Prince in building relationships and uncovering new revenue opportunities.

In Illinois, Prince has 40 full-license workstations and 10 data collection terminals on the shop floor. The Shanghai facility currently has eight users.

“With Vantage we can now examine jobs faster, dissect them more closely and capture profitability information in real-time,” says Miller. “Vantage helps us analyze the best mix of business, what is the most profitable and why.”

While previous data collection screens showed only two lines of data, Prince employees can now access a wealth of information from user-friendly touch screens, using bar codes to clock in and out of jobs.

“Operators can see the next steps in the process, and learn what’s coming up next,” comments Miller. “We’re empowering employees with more information.”

Miller says everyone loves the ability to “drill down” from anywhere in the program, without having to back out first. “Vantage makes it very convenient to get information quickly.”

Month-end accounting has accelerated by approximately 25 percent, and Miller expects even more improvement in the future.

From an administrative standpoint, Miller says Vantage has been phenomenal. “Updates are fast and seamless—automatically pushed to each client machine—and we no longer have any database issues.” Miller concludes, “Vantage has definitely made my life a whole lot easier.”

# Standex Industries

## Industry

Global manufacturer

## Headquarters

Salem, New Hampshire

## Employees

4,700 Employees

## Epicor solution

Epicor Vantage

## Business Challenge

Needed a flexible and comprehensive ERP solution that could address the needs of Standex's diverse product lines

## Solution

A solution to suit a wide range of manufacturing situations and needs—from job shop to repetitive manufacturing

## Business Benefits

- Robust application set, with low overall cost
- Ease of use
- Reduced labor costs
- Quickly integrate newly acquired companies

**“As technology gets cheaper and labor gets more expensive, we are looking for the best arrangement to give us a low labor cost with low investment in equipment and software as well. We found that with Epicor.”**

— Andy Lippo,  
Corporate MIS Director  
Standex Corporation

Imagine you are the IT Director of a company with 90 plants in 17 businesses that make more than 48,000 products that span the range from custom hydraulic cylinders and missile nose cones, to fine china and religious literature. Imagine also that these widely disparate and geographically dispersed businesses all rely on centralized, custom-developed software running on ‘big iron’ at corporate headquarters. That’s the way things were at Standex Corporation, with headquarters in Salem, New Hampshire, before a major transition to newer and more easily supported systems began.

The first transition, a number of years ago, was to move off of the central mainframe onto 45 distributed minicomputers, with corporate IT providing standard applications for each division. All support was handled by corporate IT. As time and technology moved forward, it became clear that network-based packaged ERP offered a more cost-effective solution that could give the plants more autonomy while reducing the support burden on both local and centralized IT resources. So, Standex went shopping for a packaged ERP system that was comprehensive and flexible enough to address the needs of such a wide-ranging manufacturing enterprise.

“We looked at all the usual suspects,” says Andy Lippo, corporate MIS director. “I won’t name names, but we considered all the major mid-range systems. We hired a consultant and put together an RFP (request for proposal) and went through the full selection process.” Flexibility was a prime criterion, since the various businesses within Standex cover such a very wide range of manufacturing situations and needs—from job shop to repetitive manufacturing—and some plants with both, which Standex calls mixed-mode plants.

In addition, Standex wanted a “one stop shop” for software and services that could provide support for all the companies worldwide. While the individual companies within the corporation operate autonomously, consolidated information is required at the corporate level, so multi-plant consolidation was also a requirement. Another key criterion was overall cost: “We were interested in the total cost, acquisition cost, of course but also the labor cost

to implement, operate and support the systems. "Epicor solidly met all requirements and won the business. Today, Standex is standardizing all plants and its corporate headquarters on the Epicor Vantage solution. From a starting point of 45 individual systems, Standex is consolidating the IT infrastructure onto seven hubs that will each support a group of companies. The hubs are set up based on possible synergies available through similarity in markets and/or product types.

The Philadelphia hub for the Air Distribution Group, for example, supports eight companies. The Engraving Group hub in Rochester NY has 12 companies participating. The Food Service group hub resides in Albany, Mississippi, and supports six companies. "As technology gets cheaper and labor gets more expensive, we are looking for the best arrangement to give us a low labor cost with low investment in equipment and software as well," Lippo explains. "We found that with Epicor. ERP is a great tool but there can be a high cost (to implement it) and a lot of maintenance support. Epicor is a robust application set, but the overall cost is low." Lippo says the key is ease of use. "Training on the Vantage system is quick and easy," he explains. "There are tutorials built right into the applications."

One objective of the project is to improve management reporting to corporate headquarters. Standex is using the Vantage Business Intelligence (VBI) application to accomplish that reporting effectively. "The consolidation efficiencies reduce our labor costs," states Lippo. "We are setting it up so that the financial information automatically flows up to corporate, with local review. At corporate, we have the centralized accounting function, also on Vantage. Each company operates autonomously within the Vantage multisite setup." "VBI at the hubs consolidates information from the companies using that hub and allows division management to review the results before sending them on. VBI at corporate headquarters in New Hampshire gathers the data from the hubs and consolidates it at the corporate level. Standex is using a Balanced Scorecard approach, including operational data as well as financial results.

In addition to manufacturing sites all over North America, Standex has operations in Europe and Asia, so multi-national capabilities were an important consideration. "We have one operation in Europe that will be first in our international rollout. That's the Barbeque King plant in the U.K.," says Lippo. "And we're working on other plans in Eastern Europe and Singapore." Standex is making sure that the software is properly 'localized', that is, contains the functionality needed to address local customs,

process, regulations, and ways of doing business, before rolling it out in each country. "We wanted to make sure the vendor could support us in every geography, as well," adds Lippo.

The focal point of the two-year rollout project is an implementation team consisting of two senior "manufacturing systems integrators" who are well versed in the Epicor software and highly trained in manufacturing operations. The team travels to each new hub location to review the business case with division management and document expected return on investment and improvements, plant by plant. Next, responsibilities are assigned and local teams take charge. The corporate team helps with training, makes sure that the project stays on track, and reports progress to corporate headquarters. Early adopters are showing great improvements in operational payback and savings. The Spincraft plant in Wisconsin, one of the first Standex companies to implement Vantage, is a contract manufacturer (job shop) that is using the full Vantage system including data collection.

Although the company was reluctant to provide financial details, they enthusiastically reported a "great return" on their efforts and investment. When the division is able to roll up and report data to corporate automatically, the savings will be even greater. Standex has a long and successful record of buying well-run businesses and integrating them into the corporate family for 'win-win' results. Synergy is an important factor at Standex: capitalizing on the strengths of the businesses they acquire, while translating these strengths into opportunities that raise the performance of Standex as a whole. In this way, success in one Standex business contributes to success in others.

An important factor in achieving the desired synergy is using technology to reduce costs and enhance supply chain operations. The hub-based IT infrastructure, built on the outstanding operational capabilities of the Vantage system, is a key component for achieving these synergies.

Using Vantage to achieve their stated goal of continued expansion through targeted acquisitions, Standex is well positioned to integrate newly acquired companies quickly into the fold and start reaping those benefits that much sooner.

# Synovis Interventional Solutions

a division of Synovis Life Technologies

## Industry

Medical Devices

## Headquarters

Lino Lakes, MN

## Employees

270 Employees

## Epicor solution

Epicor Vantage

## Business Challenge

Needed a solution for tracking, documentation and workflow management that would provide accurate, real-time summary of business operations

## Solution

Implemented Epicor Vantage, designed to meet the needs of progressive make-to-order and mixed-mode manufacturing companies.

## Business Benefits

- Flexible and powerful reporting
- Increased efficiency—saved re-entry time and reduced errors
- Provides real-time summary of business conditions and key metrics
- Return on Investment
- Grew business by 50% per year, increasing administrative staff by only 25%
- Virtually paperless office
- Improved customer service

**“With Vantage our employees have a greater ownership in the process—understanding what’s going in the system and tracking the parts they set up. As our company has grown, our use of Vantage has helped us manage our growth.”**

— Alex Neutgens  
Controller  
Synovis Interventional Solutions

The vital importance of medical products manufacturing gives even routine activities extra significance. Synovis Interventional Solutions (a division of Synovis Life Technologies) depends on Epicor Vantage to manage its manufacturing and precision machining operations.

“Because all the Vantage modules are integrated, there is good information flow to track everything that happens,” says Alex Neutgens, controller with Synovis Interventional Solutions. “We’re able to follow a product from quote through shipment, which is very important for both FDA and ISO requirements.”

Synovis Interventional Solutions is a diversified medical products company that develops devices for the interventional treatment of disease. Between the financial requirements of a publicly traded company and the FDA regulations of a medical products manufacturer, Synovis must be able to track and document virtually all its processes and products in painstaking detail.

The company has been using Vantage since 1997, maintaining most information about products and production history in the system. For example, users must enter their personal password in Vantage whenever working in the system. Vantage creates a footprint or device history record for each action regarding a device, tracking who worked on it and when.

## Easy to Use, Learn

Erica Steffens, IT Project Manager at Synovis, was involved in the original Vantage implementation. She says that being able to look up information quickly and easily is one of the system’s biggest benefits.

“This is a definite strength of Vantage,” she explains. “With the Vantage Trackers, you can follow one piece of information throughout the system, without having to back out of screens and go into other modules.”

In her role providing IT support throughout the company, Steffens sees Vantage from the perspective of every department and function, from implementation to front-line training and support. She believes the system is easy to learn. "The screens are all laid out similarly, once you learn one area or module in Vantage, it is pretty easy to learn the others," she explains. "Epicor's terminology is also very clear and straightforward, with online help available if necessary."

A regular attendee at Epicor's annual Perspectives conference, Steffens values the opportunity to learn about future plans for Vantage and how to maximize the benefits of the current version. Networking with other Vantage users is also an effective way to share tips and solutions. "I always come away from Perspectives with a lot of good ideas," says Steffens, who also participates in the Minnesota Vantage user group.

### Flexible, Powerful Reporting

For day-to-day operations, Synovis has developed a library of custom reports, tracking all the key metrics for running its business, including efficiencies, variances on jobs, margins and revenue. Vantage provides all the key information required to give an accurate, real-time summary of business conditions and key metrics.

"We're able to utilize the reporting tools in Vantage to extract all the necessary information in a timely, efficient manner," comments Neutgens. He says the majority of these reports are online, making Synovis a paperless company. The Document Management module enables Synovis personnel on the production floor to quickly access any document at any time. Customized production schedule reports are run for each department every morning, showing what to work on that day.

The Time-Phase Material report improves Synovis' responsiveness to customer orders. With it, the purchasing department can quickly check inventory levels and order additional materials if necessary based on customer demands or specific min-max levels defined in Vantage. Together with proper order-cancellation procedures, this has essentially eliminated obsolete inventory.

Slow-moving inventory is traced in the change log to determine the root causes. Synovis uses other reports to trace material lot numbers, meeting both FDA requirements and customer demands. For example, if a customer calls about a certain wire lot number, real-time information can be quickly pulled up on all jobs linked to that lot number.

"Otherwise we'd be digging through files manually," explains Steffens, who adds that although these customer requests are infrequent, Synovis must be able to respond quickly when asked.

The integrated Vantage system means there is less paperwork and hands-on administrative support needed to manage the system as Synovis grows. "We're able to keep staffing levels down in

customer service because it is easy to access information needed with Vantage," says Steffens.

By leveraging Vantage's capabilities to increase efficiency, Synovis has been able to grow more than 50 percent per year with only a 25 percent increase in administrative staffing. When the Synovis Interventional Solutions division started on Vantage in 1997, revenues were \$4.1 million. By fiscal 2003, revenues had climbed to \$32.3 million.

Accounting is another area where Synovis realizes savings from reduced data entry and repetitive work. Because the Vantage system interfaces with the general ledger, the accounts payable department simply matches up invoices with data previously entered by the receiving department. Invoices for the accounts receivable department are generated automatically from packing slips.

### Future Plans

Neutgens says there are currently 45 Vantage users and 17 data collection terminals at his facility in Minnesota; the company's manufacturing facility in Puerto Rico has 10 users and five data collection terminals. He says Vantage was selected for the plant in Puerto Rico because of its ease of use.

In the future, Synovis expects to manufacture more core components in Puerto Rico, for direct shipment to customers' facilities nearby. The facility in Lino Lakes, a northern suburb of St. Paul, will focus on both contract manufacturing and making proprietary products.

Vantage utilization has increased in Minnesota, with more people using the system—almost doubling in the past year. Synovis engineers, for example, had never entered information in the system before. Now they are encouraged to use the Engineering Workbench to develop the bill of materials while in the quoting and production stage, which speeds up the process. Making changes to the Methods Master, instead of by hand, saves re-entry time and reduces errors from illegible writing. Neutgens says the Workbench is also a helpful tool to control the checking in and out of documents.

"With Vantage our employees have a greater ownership in the process—understanding what's going in the system and tracking the parts they set up," says Neutgens. "As our company has grown, our use of Vantage has helped us manage our growth."

Synovis is among the first Epicor customers scheduled to deploy Vantage 8, one of the industry's first manufacturing solutions based on a 100-percent service-oriented architecture (SOA), a new application development paradigm that enables businesses to leverage best-in-class software services through open industry standards, simplifying application development and integration.

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