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IT contributes for operative management of the business in Sofia Med

MOM4 software helps the plant to structure its activities and to remove the excessive operations, thus achieving higher quality at a good price for short terms.

Aneliya Stoyanova

Sofia Med is a daughter company of the Greek holding Halcor. The company produces a wide range of rolled and extruded copper and copper alloy products including sheets, strips, circles, disks, bars, rods, flats, profiles. The company consists of 3 production units: Foundry, Rolling and Extrusion. The biggest part of the production is for export and the management of the company constantly strives to update the technologies, in order to be up to the standards of its international clients. Since September 2009, the personnel in Sofia Med works with the system Manufacturing Operations Management (MOM4) of the software company NearSoft. At this point of time, the system is deployed in the rolling department, and till the middle of 2010 it will be implemented in the rest of the units. In Sofia Med, MOM4 is used for planning, organization of the production, and for control of the processes. The software is also used as a management tool which structures the activities and the responsibilities in the company.



Herve Leverrier, Head of Planning Department in Sofia Med

THE SELECTION PROCESS

Herve Leverrier, Head of Planning Department in Sofia Med comes to Bulgaria in order to become part of the team, which will update the technologies in the plant. His experience in a similar plant in France helps him to optimize the administrative and technical processes in the plant by deploying MOM4 - the software for operative management of the business.

Leverrier explained that there was not similar system in Sofia Med. Thus, the definition of the characteristics of the solution that they would need became a difficult task. "We knew that we have to be in close cooperation with the provider. Due to the specifics of our work it is not easy to implement ready-made system. Many things have to be adapted towards our activity.", explained Leverrier. That is why, a year and a half ago, Sofia Med chooses the product MOM4 of the Swiss-Bulgarian company NearSoft, which is specialized in development and deployment of software solutions for production plants. Then, the software is not yet developed and exists only as concepts, which will be realized gradually in synchronization with the plant demands. The identical thinking of the provider, the good communication, as well as the necessity that the supplier is close to them, are the leading factors for the choice.

The choice is for MOM4, also taken because of the possibility of the system to be integrated with another software. It is open, because it is developed according to the standard ISO 62264 (ANSI/ISA 95), which is supported by many other companies. "In this way we can define the quality characteristics and the quality results for us. Sometimes, when we create some system, we try to define the objects, but in this case this was not necessary because somebody had already written this standard - which means that this was the best way to do it.", explained Leverrier.

Despite the fact that the entrepreneurship looked risky in the beginning, after the development and the deployment of the system in September 2009, it turned out successful. The chosen approach costs much cheaper than the buying and deployment of software ordered by another supplier.

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the new system in Sofia Med faces a lot of obstacles which are overcome by the management. First, the best practices for work have to be defined and described. "This procedure took us a lot of time because actually we could not write the rules. The people always think "We are professionals, we know how to work and we do not need to write.", but it is important for the company to establish its own know-how, to define its best practices, to apply them, to write the results and check if they match the expectations. If not, to adapt to them. This is the so-called "improvement loop", the well-known PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act). All those steps are included in MOM4.", explained Leverrier. The definition and the implementation of the rules turned out to be long process, even longer than the implementation of the software.

The information system contributes for better visibility of all processes and ensures their execution in a uniform way every time. It decreases the waste – waste of time, excessive material, human resource, and unproductive operations. It also constantly improves the control for realization of the best strategies.

Another challenge which the management came upon was the organization – who is responsible for what. While estimating the work, before deploying the system it becomes clear that too much paper and transport is used, which leads to infinite exchange of information from one person to another. This leads to the moment, where one piece of paper travels 970m, goes through 11 employees, in order to reach the final person for whom the document is designated. Through the restructuring made with MOM4, the number of operations is decreased, all the processes are executed in real time and every machine operator knows exactly what are his tasks and responsibilities. Also, the work connected with the software implementation is a cause for improving the administrative process according the concept Lean Manufacturing. Thus, the difficulties become a good opportunity to define, improve and standardize the administrative and technical processes in Sofia Med.



Rolling manufacturing

RESULTS

For Sofia Med is important to ensure always high quality for balanced price and in the deadlines required for the customers. MOM4 helps to clearly define the criteria for quality, to structure the activities and to

organize the technical process. The system contributes for better visibility in all processes and ensures their execution in the same way every time. The most important functionality of the system is to decrease the waste – waste of time, excessive material, human resources, and useless operations. It also improves the control for realization of the best strategy.

MOM4 gives the necessary data for management in an exact and clear way. The display of each operator shows only the needed information, in order to take decisions in its sphere of responsibilities and for the sphere for which he can enter input values. Each workplace is different according the needs of each employee. If the responsibilities change, the display is also changed. The whole information is shown on the display, which eliminates the need from phone calls. “For the work of these displays we do not need IT specialists or IT department. We can orient in the system because it is intuitive and the managers use reports in real time, which helps them for the decisions they take every day.”, explained Leverrier. Due to that reason, the operators do not undergo long trainings. The training for the software is between 1-2 days for the operators and 1-2 weeks for the managers. Currently, 120 operators work with MOM4.

„We wanted a decision which is flexible. We also thought in perspective – if in the future we have new systems, they have to work together and we must be able to make the necessary changes ourselves, without the supplier” summarized Leverrier. It is yet early to make computations on the saved expenses. MOM4 however, already helps for the visualization of each situation in real time.

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