

Abbeloos Hapl'o: Optimising production efficiency with MES

The impact of wage expense on total production costs is high in our country. The situation is no different at Abbeloos Hapl'o in Dentergem. Thus, it is important for shop-floor productivity to be carefully monitored. This has been done very effectively with Bizibit's integrated IT solution. Abbeloos Hapl'o finance director Koen Van Steendam describes the story of a successful implementation in which routings, standard times per operation, and real-time feedback from the shop-floor play a major role.

Even if you don't know Abbeloos, the Hapl'o brand will certainly ring a bell. In 1897 Abbeloos became the first Belgian weaver of towelling, and today still occupies a prominent position in the European textile market. Thousands of bathrobes, mats, bibs, flannels and towels leave the factory every day. 80% of production is destined for export. One of the clear strengths is its advanced towelling printing technology, through which Abbeloos Hapl'o has been able to sign valuable licensing agreements with big names such as Walt Disney and the producers of Teletubbies.

"Our production begins with the preparation of the yarn," explains Koen Van Steendam. "The weaving mill, garment production, quality control and packaging departments are located in Dentergem. The towelling is printed in Meulebeke. Together the two establishments have 130 production workers."

"Quality, speed and competitive prices are the most important sales arguments for us", says Koen Van Steendam. "This means that an efficient control

and management system is needed on the shop-floor. That is precisely why we have used an automatic data collection system for a long time – long before we got to know Bizibit – which served us well. However, our old system had many annoying shortcomings. It was not possible to make an effective link with the AS/400, which meant that we had to contend with a lot of double entry work, both for the input of the shop-floor data in our management applications and for the input of the ordering data in our data collection database. For example, entering the man hours worked per cost site required a great deal of manual input for the wages processing. Another disadvantage was that in Meulebeke we could not develop any on-line data collection system which was integrated with Dentergem."

In 1999, Abbeloos Hapl'o selected Bizibit to switch to a completely new production control system that brought an end to the limitations of the old system, and also provided a great deal of added value. The main components of the solution are Bizibit Integrator for real-time data collection, Bizibit JobTime as a Manufacturing Execution System (MES), and Bizibit ClockWork for the timekeeping and wage preparation.

"Bizibit JobTime is the key product for monitoring productivity," explains Koen Van Steendam. "Bizibit JobTime receives the data for the orders to be produced from the production planning package-on line if need be. In Bizibit JobTime, a routing is coupled to the product code which contains standard times



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for each stage of the process, so we know exactly what standard time to expect for each order. In addition, we also know the time that each worker needs to do his job.”

“Bizibit Integrator under Windows NT controls the real-time data collection on the shop floor,” continues Koen Van Steendam. “Each workstation is equipped with a small data collection terminal. Using a simple dialogue the workers enter their personnel number, the order number, and the process they are doing at the start of the job. When signing off, the number of units produced is entered. Bizibit Integrator immediately sends this data to Bizibit JobTime which, together with the times that are automatically added with every entry, form the basis of our efficiency control.”

“Bizibit JobTime supplies valuable up-to-date reports at any time,” confirms Koen Van Steendam. “For every order the actual time is compared with the calculated standard time. This is done for each worker. In this way we can closely monitor the production efficiency and make adjustments where necessary.”

“By signing off at every stage of the process, we can accurately assess the progress of our ongoing orders at every stage of the production cycle. This is crucial for our production planning and it also gives us a very nice commercial added value,” assures Koen Van Steendam.

“The integration with the timekeeping has turned out to be very useful. Bizibit ClockWork uses the same

entries to calculate the time our employees have worked. Bizibit ClockWork then allocates the correct wage codes for every employee. With a minimum of effort on our part, we can supply all the data that our social secretariat needs for the wages administration.”

“Compared with our old system, we have made a lot of progress,” says Koen Van Steendam. “An important improvement is the on-line support via modem that Bizibit gives us. The integration with Meulebeke and the monitoring of machine efficiencies by having direct links to the machines are facilities that we did not have before.”

“The cooperation with Bizibit? For me an IT partner must satisfy some important conditions”, emphasises Koen Van Steendam. “It must be a solvent, stable company. I expect considerable breadth of vision and a lot of expertise from an IT partner. Bizibit showed itself to be a valuable and reliable partner in all these respects.”

Bizibit wishes Abbeloos Hapl’o a great deal of success in the further automation of its production facilities.

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