

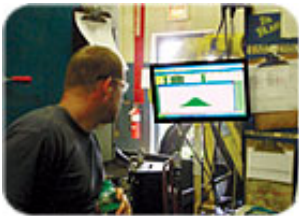


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Case Study: Software Brings New Business

February 7, 2012

Company realizes benefits of SPC software.



After United Gear and Assembly began using Synergy, they found that the software made it easy for individuals without a statistics background to create charts on their machines, set up to receive notifications, reduce the number of errors and assist the inexperienced operator in understanding the process clearly. *Source: Zontec*

When Douglas Winfrey, director of quality, started at United Gear and Assembly (Hudson, WI), the Synergy software from Zontec (Cincinnati) had already been purchased, but was not fully utilized. “I inherited Synergy, and I enforced it,” says Winfrey.

Winfrey immediately saw the benefits of utilizing the statistical process control software. “The real issue was that we were collecting all of this data, but not looking at the data. Synergy gave us a way to easily pull up the data and act on what we are seeing; it also gave us the ability to access the data anywhere in the world including our customer sites,” says Winfrey.

United Gear and Assembly has been in business for 50 years. During that time, they have evolved from a family-owned business into a multi-million dollar company and a core supplier of precision gears, shafts and related assemblies to companies in the automotive, agriculture, forestry, construction, mining, marine and rail industries. “We are now expanding our presence along with our parent company, United Stars, based out of Beloit, WI, into the Pacific Rim and recently opened an office in China,” Winfrey explains.

After United Gear and Assembly began using Synergy, they found that the software made it easy for individuals without a statistics background to create charts on their machines, set up to receive notifications, reduce the number of errors and assist the inexperienced operator in understanding the process clearly. “It’s a very good teaching tool to be able to explain with visuals to describe where the process is running at and where we want to be,” says Winfrey. “Within seconds, we can call up a part number on a machine and know what’s going on with that machine or the current production run.

“Since implementing Synergy, the reduction in paperwork is huge. Before every entry took us about 3½ minutes per sample size and now it only takes us less than 30 seconds. There are 240 critical characteristics we could be measuring at any given time. Using Synergy has saved us about 12 man-hours per day,” says Winfrey.

One of the benefits United Gear and Assembly has experienced is that they came to a better understanding of their machines and their capabilities. “Through data gathering, charting and analysis, we can analyze data on every product produced in a particular machine. We can get to the root cause, whether it is the people, the process or the machine,” explains Winfrey. “We run product on several machines. With Synergy we can compare a machine’s capability, which gives us the least variation and best product. We can see inconsistencies and make systematic changes across the entire process. We can see data points for all products, regardless of machine and resolve inconsistencies for all processes.”

Synergy also gives United Gear and Assembly the ability to effectively manage the lifecycle of its tools. Through the use of run charts and other Synergy tools, they can determine tool life and predict how many parts can run before needing to make adjustments or change out the tool. “We can budget our tool life management more accurately and effectively based on this data,” says Winfrey.

Synergy has helped United Gear and Assembly in deciding whether to repair or replace equipment. “Synergy can show us if a particular machine can’t produce a particular product in a specific tolerance range. This data can then be used to justify procurement of new equipment,” Winfrey adds.

In addition, Synergy helped United Gear and Assembly with its Six Sigma and continuous improvement initiatives. “In the aspects of our business where we are using Synergy, we have seen our PPM (parts per million) decrease,” says Winfrey. “On average, we have reduced our nonconformities by 20%. We also have a very low scrap rate in those applications.”

Winfrey adds that Synergy also is a valuable business development tool. “I have been in meetings at the customer’s location where we are discussing a new product. Synergy gives us the ability to log into our server, show them the exact machine that would be used to produce the new product, what tolerance the machine is currently running and the capability history of that machine,” Winfrey explains. “This type of information shows the customer what they need to see before moving forward. Synergy provides us that edge to win the business.”

Zontec

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Benefits

By using Synergy, paperwork has been reduced, resulting in a savings of 12 man-hours per day.

Tool life management can be budgeted more accurately and effectively based on collected data.

Nonconformities have been reduced by 20%.

Scrap rate has been reduced.