

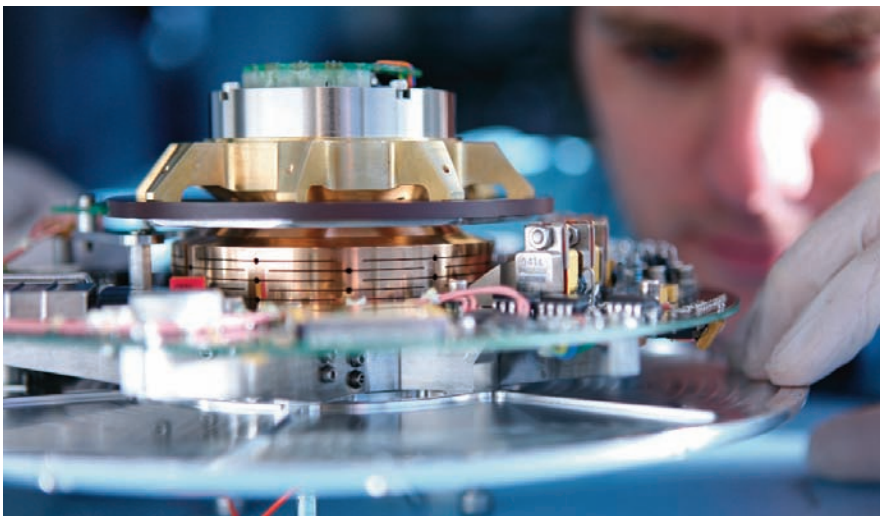
Customer case studies

Surrey Satellite Technology

Surrey Satellite Technology Limited (SSTL) is a high-tech organisation that was spun out of the University of Surrey in 1985 so that the results of the university's satellite research programmes could be made available to a wider industrial community.

"We've been able to cut lead times by up to 25 per cent."

Geoff Cooper
Manufacturing Manager



Industry	Manufacturing
Geographic	Surrey
Employees	290
Turnover	£12.8m
Solution	Access Supply Chain
Modules	Purchase orders Works orders Job costing Stock control Resource Engine (MRPII) Time recording Alerts

The challenge

Back in 1993, SSTL wanted to streamline its stock control and manufacturing processes as it was winning more contracts and placing greater demands on its very basic system. By choosing Access Supply Chain, SSTL was able to reap benefits very quickly in terms of speed, accuracy and visibility of information. The business had the supporting software it needed to enable it to move on to a new dimension and the flexibility for future expansion.

When SSTL is awarded a contract it contains a set of requirements to meet the mission objectives. "Every spacecraft is a bespoke instrument, a combination of heritage units and new developments," explains Geoff Cooper, Manufacturing Manager for SSTL. "Customers don't necessarily want to fly brand-new technology;

they may want to fly key items that have been in orbit already." For the design team, therefore, the aim is to strike a balance between proven and new technology. "Our "order to orbit" timescales are normally very demanding, with large peaks in workload and a short period to process the build."

The solution

Previously, SSTL was only able to manufacture one satellite at a time. Today, with their Access Supply Chain solution, they are simultaneously manufacturing five satellites or more, using the software to support manufacturing 'from cradle to grave'. Cooper continues, "it's where we record all part numbers, generate bills of materials, procure materials and manage the progress through to the Assembly, Integration and Test (AIT) area."

When Geoff moved into the role of Manufacturing Manager, he initiated an in-depth review of the site's ERP solution.

"We quickly established that some of our processes, whilst valid, no longer mapped exactly to the software. We exposed processes that had been introduced over the years to solve symptoms rather than the problem." His plan proved very fruitful. "It's a highly configurable tool and has allowed us to eliminate and/or absorb these manual processes by modifying the system settings."

Geoff and his team have been working with Access to identify how best to use the existing functionality, as well as to introduce new elements to the system. One of these is top level works orders for projects – something that Geoff says has significantly helped smooth out the workload fluctuations. "We look at the product from the top down, as the designers add and subtract parts from the bill of materials, we can react accordingly."

Intuitive planning

By way of example, Geoff explains it in more everyday terms. "Imagine the spacecraft as a bicycle. We raise a top level works order for the finished product despite the bills of material only calling up the gears, brakes and handlebars. We know we will need a frame, forks and wheels but we have to wait for engineering to define their size and to specify the other elements. As they do we have better visibility of the product, day by day and can therefore plan our downstream activities.

Time is a crucial asset, particularly for this sector. "A number of components that we routinely use have very long lead times. This top level works ordering means we can identify these items at an early stage – by using Access Supply Chain more effectively, we can reduce our schedule risk. We've been able to cut lead times by anything up to 25 per cent," he says.

Part of the team

SSTL prides itself on the fact that employees are part of a family – and Geoff says he sees this same trait in Access Supply Chain. "It's one of those organisations that has a special feel to it; it's small enough to give the right level of customer intimacy, yet large enough to be able to handle quite complex issues for us. In fact, I regard Access Supply Chain as part of our extended team."

Key benefits

- **Visibility** – improved use of the system has brought much better visibility of work-in-progress
- **Planning and communication** – both the manufacturing and design teams can see precisely what stage the other is at, so smoothing workload patterns
- **Lead times** cut by up to 25 per cent
- **Management** - more efficient working practices are now supported by an up-to-date software system that mirrors the sophisticated business of SSTL
- **Efficiency** – top-level works order approach means fewer works order edits; less time managing shortages; a more expedient build and less downtime - in short efficiency is up, along with morale.

Who we are

Access specialises in the provision of fully functional ERP solutions for medium and large companies. Our modular system will give you a fully connected platform that can be constantly tuned and expanded – now and as you grow. Whether you are a distribution, manufacturing, assembly or service company, we provide cost-effective functionality for every aspect of your organisation.

Our Access Supply Chain ERP solution incorporates both distribution and manufacturing packages. Select the manufacturing modules and you can incorporate any or all of the distribution modules and vice versa. Both packages include fully integrated financials and, to complete your solution, powerful productivity modules are also available.

Further information

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