

Expanded Metal Company

Expanded Metal Company offers the most comprehensive range of expanded metal mesh available anywhere in the world. They also specialize in mesh pressings and finished mesh products for the filtration and architectural markets. In addition they supply perforated sheets and alternatives to woven and welded wire.

The Expanded Metal Company has been supplying worldwide markets in industrial and building products from their manufacturing site in Hartlepool, England for over 100 years. Additional production facilities in Germany and Poland give customers access to the most effective production techniques throughout Europe. Well-established distribution facilities worldwide ensures that The Expanded Metal Company can respond effectively to international orders of all sizes.

The Expanded Metal Company is a Gibraltar Industries Company. Gibraltar Industries is a leading manufacturer, processor, and distributor of primarily metal materials for the building, vehicular, and industrial markets. Gibraltar serves a large number of customers in a variety of industries in the USA, Canada, Mexico, Europe, Asia, and Central and South America. They have approximately 3,600 employees and operate 77 facilities in 26 states of the USA, Canada, China, UK, Germany and Poland.

Product Mix

The Expanded Metal Company produces a variety of products that you can view on their website at: <http://www.expandedmetalcompany.co.uk/>

Production scheduling problems faced before implementing Decision One

1. The planning process was flawed, as a number of Supervisors had an input to the plan and would give commitments on orders to our Sales staff without being aware of the available capacity, or how changes they made to the plan affected orders agreed by another Supervisor.
2. The planning process was time consuming in terms of deriving the plan and more importantly modifying it when customer's priorities changed and orders needed re-sequencing etc. The effect of re-sequencing an order on any linked processes could not be seen easily.
3. Planned maintenance suffered on occasion due to a combination of the above, and had to be re-scheduled to ensure customers received their orders on time.

Goals of the project

1. To reduce the time spent on the planning process and enable the function to be performed by one person, taking away the risk of orders being committed to by the Supervisors when capacity may not have been available.
2. To have a visual indicator showing live orders and available capacity for each process, so that order lead times could be adjusted accordingly.
3. To be able to generate distributable reports.

Highlights

- Decision One allows the Expanded Metal Company to schedule large seasonal product orders along with daily and weekly on-demand orders.
- Decision One gives the Expanded Metal Company the flexibility to change the schedule easily and quickly.
- Decision One allows the Expanded Metal Company sales department to give customers accurate deliver dates with the assurance they will meet the date.

4. Allow planned maintenance to become an integral part of the plan rather than something to be fitted in or around whatever time was left.

How Decision One succeeded in meeting/exceeding these goals

1. Inputting orders or modifying the plan now only takes minutes and is carried out by one person.
2. The visual presentation of the plan, and the reports available, is exactly what was needed and allows Supervisors to easily review available capacity, order status and the effects of changes to the plan (either due to a change in customer priorities or enforced changes because of a machine breakdown etc.)
3. Overall Decision One exceeded expectations and has transformed a laborious time consuming task into one that requires little effort and gives a massive pay back in the time freed up and the smoother scheduling of our plant.

How results are being measured

1. On Time Delivery performance through better capacity utilization. Hence more accurate lead times being agreed to with our Sales staff for future orders.
2. Cost savings & performance improvements.

Any unique challenges encountered/handled

1. Very little information was available giving accurate run times for the small daily and weekly on-demand orders. The routings within Decision One allows this valuable information to be retained and should it (or a slight variation) be required in the future it takes little effort to set up and use.
2. The acceptance of the need for a graphical, software based planning system had to be won; the benefits of such a step change from previous methods used over the companies history were not immediately clear to all.

