# HULFT overhauls high-volume CNC sales and product catalog database in under 30 days

HULFT's Client Company is one of the world's largest providers of comprehensive metal cutting solutions for milling, stationary tools, hole making, and tooling systems. They offer a range of tools; from micro milling required in medical manufacturing to tools needed in automotive and aerospace development. Their customer base includes all of the global automobile manufacturers, several world-wide distributors, and hundreds of smaller companies. The Client Company is present in more than 75 countries and employs over 4,000 people. Their annual revenue is USD 1B.

## Situation

The Client Company manufactures custom tooling for CNC machines for thousands of distributors. These tools are developed by using standard indexable inserts to create designs based on specifications needed by each client. Each machine tool is assigned a unique product code which is subsequently included within the customer's sales catalog.

Currently, the specifications for all newly manufactured tools along with the product description and unique product number are entered manually. At the start of the project, there were over 150,000 different tools identified in the catalog. This catalog drives the creation of Bills of Materials (BoM's) for new customers, involving comparisons of the geometry and technical features of the part, and other complex measurements for precision in pricing and subsequent production. Without a database that allows accurate comparisons, completing a Bill of Materials for complex cutting solutions could take upwards of 8 months.

Increasing efficiency and accuracy in the catalog process was a priority for several important reasons. Increasing speed and accuracy in the cataloging process, increasing the speed and accuracy in the creation of Bills of Materials, and improving overall cost were the top priorities HULFT addressed. Maintaining this catalog for just-in-time use and precision was a priority.

## Challenge

The tools manufactured can be categorized as brand new products, composed of all newly developed subcomponents or as a new product made from a combination of several existing subcomponents. Final product numbers are manually generated and entered into a master database. The Machining Department leader indicated that several different databases operating in silos were used in the identification, codification, and cataloging process. These databases did not operate in sync with one another and therefore required substantial human resources to complete Bills of Materials. The leader recognized the inefficiencies in the present system and desired an automated system to improve employee morale, improve efficiency, and dramatically shorten the timeframe required to provide a Bill of Materials for customers, which would lead to increased production to increase profits.

## The HULFT solution

HULFT recognized that the product number database in use relied on legacy AS/400 database formats, a large set of XML based websites, and a large collection of Excel spreadsheets. HULFT Integrate

allowed all data sources to be read, in synchrony, to perform data extraction, table transformation through unification and clean up, and to load the transformed data into a single Tools Lifecycle Management system. HULFT was able to accomplish the merging, cleansing, rotating, and tessellation of the data, which allowed the department specialist to finally create the tools lifecycle management database that was required. This process was originally projected to take several years to complete, and, in the end, HULFT Integrate allowed this to happen in less than 30 days. In addition, for all future changes, over 150,000 tools, over 150,000 XML documents, and approximately 30,000 excel spreadsheets can be transformed and inserted into the Tools Lifecycle Management system in under 10 hours, allowing for agility in future tools management endeavors.

HULFT worked closely with the lead machinist during the initial phase. During these meetings, HULFT relied on our expertise in organizational change processes to listen for pertinent information and to pose carefully crafted questions to allow HULFT to help that machinist create a customized software solution, while also providing often neglected strategies for solutions to the behavioral characteristics of employees that typically surface during implementation.

The HULFT team asked key individuals in the Client Company to walk through internal processes from start to finish. HULFT listened, outlined, asked questions, sought clarity, and captured necessary information to provide a responsive solution, and help the machinists customize Integrate generating their own software solution that they themselves can modify in the future without waiting for anyone to write code for them. In addition to the improved efficiency and cost saving solutions HULFT Integrate provided subsequent improvements in employee morale were also reported, with reasons identified as the level of employee involvement utilized in co-creating the customized HULFT Integrate solution as well as the elimination of redundant work.

## HULFT process support for implementation

HULFT recognizes the inherent challenges that often accompany the implementation of a new software solution, especially when that solution's success hinges on the proper use of legacy data and systems. Some of these challenges often include differences in skill levels among team members, early adopter enthusiasm surpassing that of other key personnel, allocating time for training, addressing the "implementation dip", and communicating process hurdles and successes throughout roll-out.

The HULFT team is equipped with a deep knowledge and understanding of organizational change and we include preemptive measures to help the client organization's leadership team in successful roll-outs. HULFT's longevity in the field and the diverse background are purposefully sought among team members adds value to the work far beyond software development products.

**Want to learn more?**

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