

Fountain Set incorporates a scheduling platform to help them manage their huge production facilities

Many Hong Kong enterprises have setup their factories in mainland China because there is inexpensive labor. But that is not enough to make the difference in a competitive and changing world. Fast changing markets, shortening product life-cycles and increasing product offerings are forcing enterprise manufacturers to expand their production facilities and improve their sales and marketing strategies.

Because of this, Fountain Set (Holdings) Limited, an enterprise with over 36 years of experience in textile manufacturing, implemented Taylor Scheduler in their production facility to help with planning and scheduling tasks and improve response time to issues that arise daily in the facilities.

Manual processes of scheduling and planning can no longer handle all the problems

Headquartered and listed in Hong Kong, Fountain Set has production facilities in mainland China, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. They have a global work force of approximately 23,000 people. Fountain Set has lead their industry in bringing quality and innovations to textile and garment design and manufacturing. Today they offer a dazzling array of products for dyed yarn, fabric, and garments world-wide.

Fountain Set thus, manufactures not only the building blocks of textiles (yarn) but also produces the fabric and then the final garments for consumption. The factories in mainland China are responsible for almost 90% of their production. Some of their work-centers have more than a thousand machines and the machines vary in capability and functionality. This gives Fountain Set the ability to handle the wide variety of products they manufacture but it also increases the complexity of the scheduling and planning process for people trying to manage the day-to-day operations. To manage such huge production facilities effectively, planning and scheduling become the key success factor.

Although Fountain Set implemented an advanced ERP system many years ago, they were still using a manual production scheduling process. It was an extensive search and evaluation process that led them to Taylor Scheduler in 2004 from Taylor Scheduling Software. They discovered Taylor Scheduler is able to quickly calculate their schedules and optimize the manufacturing process. Taylor Systems Limited Hong Kong was the solution provider who helped them implement this system in their yarn dyeing, fabric knitting and dyeing process facility.

Quick response to order changes

Dr. Gordon Yen, the executive director of Fountain Set said: "Scheduling is not an easy job at Fountain Set where schedulers manage a minimum of one hundred machines - some managing the schedule for several hundred machines. They need to pay particular attention to due dates and simultaneously consider resources, procurement and machine utilization factors affecting decisions regarding the sequence of orders they are trying to arrange. Other factors like the inevitable changes to orders impacts the original plans made by each scheduler, and a lot of urgent orders can arrive on their desks to be included in an already complex and loaded schedule. Customers are regularly changing due dates as well as the actual order content. To satisfy all the challenges, we must use a quick-response tool like Taylor Scheduler to schedule the manufacturing."

"Before we had this system, the communication between sales and production was carried out by phone and information was available only in weekly or daily reports. The information being used to make decisions therefore was already old. This kind of management was not accurate, fast or effective enough to satisfy the increasing demands of the sales and customer service departments of our business. We needed real-time information about things like machine failures, and manufacturing delays to deal with a business that is growing and delivering to customers that were becoming more demanding because their own businesses have become increasingly competitive. To answer the question: "How will this new change affect the existing orders in the system?" or; "How many orders will now be late?" or; "Which machines can I use to handle these urgent orders?" we needed to have something that manipulated the data quickly and gave us reliable answers. Finally, we know that our business is growing not only in numbers of orders but also in terms of overall output and we therefore need more than ever to increase our machine utilization to handle the growth effectively and efficiently. We expect that the next 10 years will be continued significant growth for Fountain Set. To manage the growth and to manage the changes, we had to change from our manual procedures to an advanced and intelligent system that was proven and reliable. Taylor Scheduler has given us this ability."

Integrated with their ERP enhanced operation abilities

Fountain Set is facing the same challenge as other enterprises; an increasing number of orders for quantities that are smaller. This naturally complicates the process of planning and scheduling. The solution implemented at Fountain Set was not just a "stand alone" scheduling application. Taylor Scheduler was integrated with the existing Fountain Set ERP system. Now when sales creates new orders in the ERP, the data will transfer to Taylor Scheduler, be scheduled accurately and returned to the ERP with the detail for every operation step being

scheduled in the plant. “Everything is automatically calculated and optimized”, said Mr. Charles Chen, the senior consultant of Taylor Systems. “Taylor Scheduler controls and monitors the shop floor operations. It also controls and manages the auxiliary requirements like inventory and tools. It was not implemented to replace people but to assist them in doing a better job for Fountain Set and their customers.”

Fountain Set is managed by forward thinking managers who know they have to keep up with a rapidly changing market and, at the same time, endeavor to control production costs. Taking advantage of the benefits that IT offers has become one of their competitive strategies and assists them in the complex tasks of; cost control, on – time deliveries and managed growth.

Fountain Set will extend the uses of Taylor Scheduler in the next three years to their other factories.

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