Firan Technology Group
Cimnet Systems™ ERP

Firan Technology Group Can't Imagine Life Without Cimnet Systems' Paradigm

PCB Manufacturer Enters a New World of Convenience and Functionality

Circuits and Cockpits

Firan Technology Group (FTG) is a North American-supplier of aerospace and defense electronics products and subsystems, with two operating units: FTG Circuits and FTG Aerospace. Products are sold in the avionics, military, telecom, medical, advanced test and measurement, contract manufacturers, and power industries. Although each industry's requirements are vast and varied, these customers require complex, precision-engineered, reliable and cost-effective units.

FTG Circuits manufactures high technology/high reliability printed circuit boards for leaders in the aviation, defense, and high technology industries. The company has operations in Toronto, Ontario and Chatsworth, Calif. FTG Aerospace manufactures illuminated cockpit panels, keyboards and sub-assemblies for original equipment manufacturers of avionics products, as well as airframe manufacturers. FTG Aerospace has operations in Toronto, Ontario.

FTG printed circuits are custom-designed, with engineering and quality control groups working closely with the individual customer. This collaborative approach enables customers to develop and bring their products to market quickly. Currently, about three-quarters of sales are to the United States.

ROI at a Glance:

The implementation of Cimnet Systems' Paradigm solution allowed Firan Technology Group (FTG), a North American supplier of aerospace and defense electronics products and subsystems, to conveniently run its business through advanced functionality. Specifically, FTG has:

- Updated Paradigm to a modern, supportable operating environment with many enhancements and improved ease-of-use.
- Reduced inventory.
- Improved ability to satisfy customer orders on-time.
- Improved data access.
- Removed limits on number of custom reports.

Relying on Paradigm

Firan Technology Group has relied on Cimnet Systems' Paradigm solution for more than 14 years, as the company has grown from a small circuit board manufacturer to a leading provider of circuit boards, rigid-flex boards, and aircraft instrument panel components.

While quite happy with the DOS-based Paradigm solution that had served them so well for 12 years, they were also painfully aware of the growing difficulties and limitations of trying to keep the underlying IT infrastructure in operation.

"We really needed to move to an operating system that could be supported," says Sheryl Hodgson, FTG's senior enterprise resource planning (ERP) analyst.

The operating system change also offered an opportunity to move up to the latest release of the Paradigm solution. "Paradigm is like our bible here," Hodgson explains. "We absolutely needed to stay with Paradigm and the prospects of getting the improvements and new features of the latest release were very exciting."

The changeover was planned for Easter weekend in 2006. "We weren't running production that weekend," Hodgson says, "so it was a good time for us to do this. There were a few people working out in the plant, but the transition plan accommodated that by keeping the bar-code system 'up' through the weekend."

"On Sunday, after the new system was ready, we converted the weekend's activity into the new database and that brought us up-to- date," Hodgson added. "When the full crew returned on Monday morning, it was like a miracle. They went right to work with the new system with no interruption."

Of course, this seamless transition did not take place without a lot of planning and hard work on the part of the implementation team. A dedicated group of people essentially worked around-the-clock through the holiday weekend to pull off this "miracle" and make it look easy.

A New World

FTG had written quite a few programs to read data from Paradigm files for various purposes. They also created reports within the system for their specific needs. In the old system, the number of such reports was limited and the data not very easy to mine.

"The users are good at getting at the data they need, but it is far easier in the new version," Hodgson says. "And there is no longer the limitation on the number of reports that can be defined and saved."

All of the basic functions that were in the old version of the system are still in the new version, but ease-of-use is definitely much better. "We use just about everything in the system," according to Hodgson, "so we were glad that all of those functions have been brought forward…with improvements, of course."

Of those improvements, one that FTG finds particularly useful is plan-by-schedule that considers all demand—not just customer orders—and schedules the plant accordingly.

"We've always used MRP, but this helps us schedule much more effectively," Hodgson says. "Our California location started off with the new version. They really love plan-by-schedule."

Another feature that has proven valuable is the consignment management module. This new feature tracks customer-owned inventory, while it is within FTG's control, and is able to properly recognize the cost side of consigned inventory. "More and more of our customers are asking for this service," Hodgson says.

FTG would not give up Paradigm for anything. "It's how we run our business," Hodgson says. "It took us a long time to build up the discipline it takes to be really successful with any ERP system. Paradigm is a good fit for us and we have become very dependent on it."