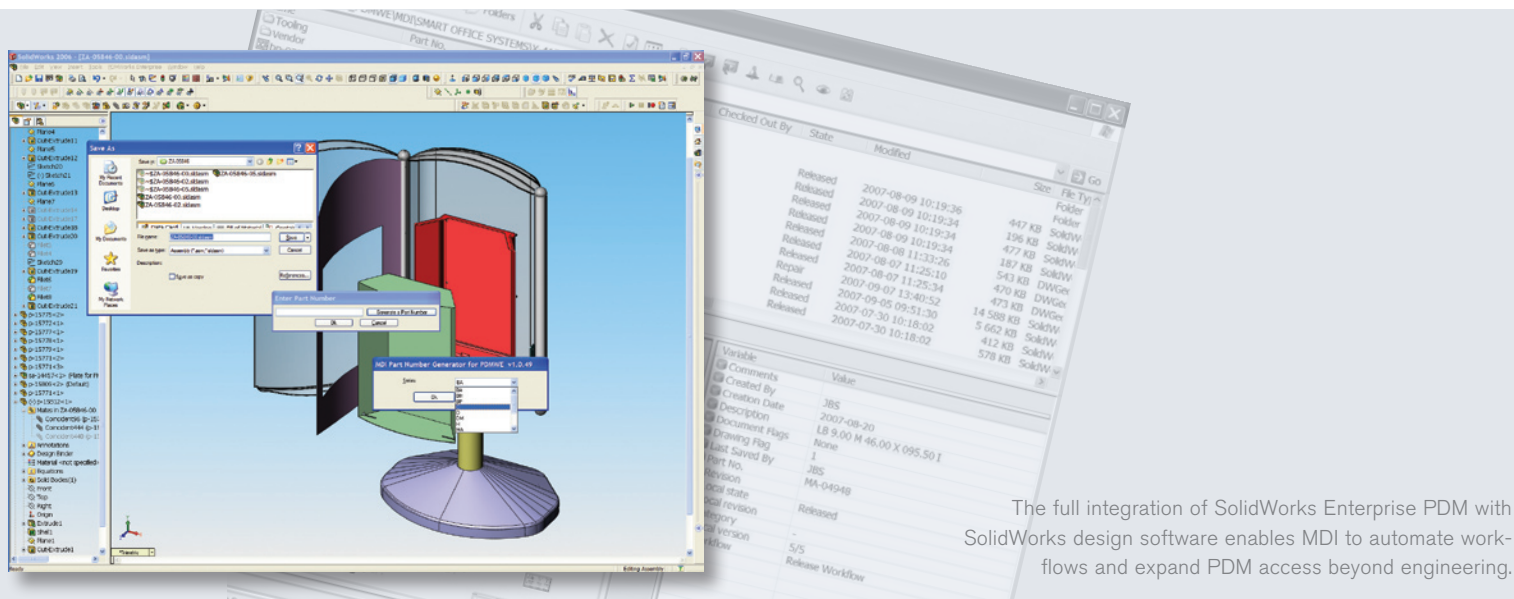


MDI

FACILITATING PROMOTIONAL DISPLAY DESIGN WITH SOLIDWORKS ENTERPRISE PDM



The full integration of SolidWorks Enterprise PDM with SolidWorks design software enables MDI to automate workflows and expand PDM access beyond engineering.

- Realized a more efficient, affordable PDM solution
- Added capabilities for automating workflows
- Facilitated in-house system administration and customization
- Expanded PDM access to personnel outside of engineering

MDI designs and manufactures promotional signage and displays for customers in a variety of industries around the world. Because a large percentage of the company's business consists of custom designs created to customer specifications, the company relies on SolidWorks® 3D CAD software to design its products quickly. Efficient, cost-effective management of product design data is an important part of that effort, according to Jeff Stout, senior product engineer.

"Our previous product data management (PDM) solution provided data management and revision control, but did not give us the ability to administer the system internally or to customize functionality to match our specific needs," Stout explains. "We needed a PDM system that was more affordable and capable, giving us the ability to administer user access in-house, configure workflows between various departments, and provide access to users in other departments. We also wanted a system that integrated more completely with SolidWorks software, with the release of updates and new versions closely coordinated with SolidWorks releases."

After deciding to transition its PDM system, MDI learned about SolidWorks Enterprise PDM software from Dassault Systèmes SolidWorks Corp. MDI selected SolidWorks Enterprise PDM – implementing seven CAD-integrated, five contributor, and 10 viewer licenses – because the system is easy to use, affordable, fully integrated with SolidWorks, and highly configurable.

"We decided to switch to SolidWorks Enterprise PDM because it is the most closely linked PDM system to SolidWorks, provides great value, and gives us the freedom to configure the system to support our processes," Stout says.

Fast, smooth implementation

Because of the system's minimal training demands, MDI quickly implemented the Enterprise PDM software over a weekend without disrupting the company's workload. Stout says that since the SolidWorks Enterprise PDM interface emulates Windows® Explorer, even nontechnical users can easily learn the software.

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SolidWorks Enterprise PDM software gives MDI the ability to administer its PDM system internally and customize functionality to match its specific needs.

“From our previous system, we converted more than 70,000 files, which represented a mix of legacy AutoCAD® files and SolidWorks files, to SolidWorks Enterprise PDM while retaining all of the SolidWorks links,” Stout recalls. “We worked up until the end of the day on Friday on the previous system, installed Enterprise PDM software over the weekend, and were up and running on Monday morning. The transition went smoothly, and xLM Solutions, our implementation partner, did an excellent job.”

“Because SolidWorks Enterprise PDM is so easy to use, we were able to execute the switch with minimal downtime,” Stout adds. “I was trained by xLM Solutions, I then trained the CAD group, purchasing, and the work center leaders, and the work center leaders trained their personnel. The training was a breeze – no training session took longer than an hour, with most lasting only 30 minutes. Everyone found it very easy to use because of the Explorer-like interface.”

Streamlining internal administration and workflow automation

SolidWorks Enterprise PDM also benefits MDI because the resources required to administer user access and configure automated workflows are minimal compared to other PDM systems. Stout says he can easily administer user access to the SolidWorks Vault and use the software’s workflow management capabilities to streamline interaction with manufacturing and other groups.

“Essentially, we are doing all the administration and configuration of workflows internally,” notes Stout. “I am setting up additional workflows with two groups in manufacturing to formalize routing procedures. Whenever an engineer completes a design, the system will route the files to either the CNC group or the tooling group as required, and notify them by email. If we need to make changes, the system will automatically generate an email from manufacturing to engineering and vice versa. We had no workflow capabilities with our previous system. Now, we anticipate that automated workflows will minimize scheduling issues and miscommunications with manufacturing.”

Expanding PDM access beyond engineering

By installing SolidWorks Enterprise PDM software, MDI has expanded PDM access to personnel outside of engineering, while improving design data search capabilities across the board. In addition to manufacturing, the CAD group interacts with an engineering support group, purchasing personnel, and graphics designers, who use illustration and graphics design software to create the signs, posters, and printed display components that adorn MDI’s mechanical systems.

“SolidWorks Enterprise PDM enables us to manage not just SolidWorks files, but also all associated design data, including Microsoft® Word, Excel, Adobe® Illustrator®, graphics, and PDF files,” explains Stout. “Purchasing can access designs and generate PDFs for quoting, manufacturing can use designs to prepare order lists of necessary components, and our graphic designers can manage the artistic elements alongside our designs. Communications that required paper in the past are now electronic, making it easier for everyone to search for and find whatever data they need.”



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