FKI Logistex

MANAGING DESIGN DATA MORE EFFICIENTLY WITH SOLIDWORKS ENTERPRISE PDM

- Increased individual PDM user productivity
- Realized fast return on investment (ROI)
- Eliminated new user training requirements
- Integrated PDM and ERP systems

FKI Logistex Denmark is a leading manufacturer of automated sorting lines for use in factories around the world. The company’s engineers use SolidWorks® 3D CAD software to develop the technical plant, AutoCAD® 2D design software to draw project layouts, and the EPLAN electrical engineering CAD system for producing electrical diagram drawings and wiring schematics. Efficient and secure management of the high volume of design data created with these tools is important to the company’s success.

According to Product Manager Per Nielsen, FKI Logistex Denmark decided to replace its existing product data management (PDM) system in 2005 because of slow data retrieval response times, ineffective vendor collaboration, and poor integration. “Performance on our system at the time was unsatisfactory — it sometimes took more than a half-hour to open one file, and there were some files we simply could not open,” Nielsen explains. “When we were faced with selecting a new system, the requirements were such that we wanted to have a system with good performance, which was well integrated with SolidWorks and was updated on an ongoing basis.”

The company evaluated a number of PDM systems before selecting SolidWorks Enterprise PDM software from SolidWorks Corporation. FKI Logistex Denmark chose the SolidWorks Enterprise system — implementing 200 seats — because of its intuitive user interface, efficient performance, favorable price-performance ratio, and full integration with SolidWorks CAD software, which allows for continuous system updates to keep in step with new versions of SolidWorks.

Smooth transition, reduced training needs

Moving from one PDM system to another is no easy task, but because of the improved performance of the SolidWorks Enterprise PDM system, converting the more than 100,000 files in the existing FKI Logistex Denmark PDM system, about 80 GB of data, to SolidWorks Enterprise was definitely worth it.
“With the conversion we had to go through three general exercises,” says Viggo Bjerrum, a design engineer at FKI Logistex. “We had to convert data and distribute files across folders in SolidWorks Enterprise PDM while upgrading from SolidWorks 2001Plus to SolidWorks 2004. We had to clarify how data is defined in the new system because of the importance of maintaining the quality of the data. At the same time, we had to define rules on how the files were to be distributed across folders.”

Those rules included locking older CAD files on their most recent versions while new files were migrated into SolidWorks Enterprise PDM to retain all links and references. While the SolidWorks implementation was smooth, Bjerrum says it would have progressed more easily if the company had started with SolidWorks Enterprise PDM from the beginning or had organized its files into a folder structure, as SolidWorks Enterprise PDM does.

Improved performance saves time and money
FKI Logistex Denmark has already achieved a return on its investment (ROI) in the SolidWorks Enterprise PDM system. The company established an ROI goal for the new PDM system equivalent to the total costs of operating and maintaining the previous system over a three-year period. FKI Logistex Denmark has achieved this goal after operating SolidWorks Enterprise PDM for just one year.

In addition to the ROI savings the company is able to quantify, FKI Logistex Denmark has realized increased productivity for each of its 110 individual users through better performance and fast data retrieval response times. While associated costs are difficult to quantify financially, the time saved by each individual user is real, and Product Manager Nielsen estimates these savings to be very significant.

Easy to use, ERP-integrated
The company has also realized the added benefits of having little to no training needs for new users and full PDM integration with its enterprise resource planning (ERP) system from Baan (now SSA GT).

Before FKI Logistex moved to the SolidWorks Enterprise PDM system, new users underwent a comprehensive period of training before they could use the previous PDM system. Because SolidWorks Enterprise PDM software utilizes the familiar Windows® Explorer user interface, user training has become unnecessary, saving the company both time and money.

SolidWorks Enterprise PDM is integrated with FKI Logistex Denmark’s Baan ERP system via a customized gateway created with ToolWorks software. SolidWorks Enterprise PDM feeds bills of materials, in XML format, via ToolWorks into the ERP system, further maximizing the value and use of system design data.

The transition from FKI Logistex’s former platform for managing sorting system design data to the SolidWorks Enterprise PDM system resulted in improved performance and reduced training needs.