

Scaled up for global business: How IFS helps Spang & Company thrive in a rapidly-changing international marketplace



Supporting ambitious business plans globally was at the heart of Spang's choice of IFS as its replacement ERP platform, a decision that has paid off over time as the company goes faster, responds faster, and delivers faster to the market since the first implementation.

Like many manufacturing companies doing business on an international level, IFS customer Spang & Company confronts similar challenges, notably maintaining profitability in the face of increasing costs and decreasing margins, where being efficient and making the most of what they have are key. Founded in Pennsylvania in 1894 as an oil field repair shop, Spang's business today is the design, production and supply of precision soft magnetic components and materials to the electronics industry and custom engineered solutions to the power industry. It operates primarily in North America and Asia—although it has customers worldwide—through three unique product lines: Magnetics, Power Control and Engineered Solutions.

The history of Spang is one of constant change, says IT Director Brian Buddemeyer. "The things we do now are not the things we did when the company was founded," he says. "The things that we do twenty years from now probably won't look much like they do now."

The challenges that first led Spang to IFS in 2001 were related to an old mainframe system that was inflexible and hard to customize. "It was nearing the end of its life and it lacked plenty of the functions that a modern ERP solution has," Buddemeyer notes. "We were at a point in our evolution where we needed to bring those functions on board."

A comprehensive evaluation program that considered ERP systems from vendors including IFS, JD Edwards and SAP resulted in the start of a long relationship with IFS. "We went with IFS because it's very full-featured, yet still customizable, and looked like it had the ability to grow and change with us," Buddemeyer says.

About Spang

Founded in 1894, Spang & Company is a diversified manufacturing company. Through the work of three unique product lines, Spang designs, produces and supplies precision soft magnetic components and materials to the electronics industry and custom engineered solutions to the power industry. With headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, Spang & Company provides products and services on a worldwide scale, with sales offices and manufacturing plants around the globe.

www.spang.com



IFS delivered on the promise

More than just buying an ERP system, Spang wanted a relationship with their chosen vendor that would help them become far more agile, enabling them to grasp business opportunity the instant it appears. “We did believe IFS would deliver on that promise,” says Buddemeyer, “and IFS has supported our business agility plans by streamlining many of the processes that we have to go through in order to operate.” He cites closing periods, turning around financial statements faster, and streamlining and optimizing production processes.

“When we implemented IFS, we had a number of processes that we had developed that were working well for us,” he says. “We were able to seamlessly integrate them into the IFS system.” Buddemeyer adds, “There were also some processes where the IFS way of doing things looked a little better to us, and we integrated them into how we operated, too.”

Delivering the core of business agility

Among the benefits Spang & Company have gained from IFS, Buddemeyer highlights these:

- Speeding up mandatory back end processes.
- Faster time to market in improving and enhancing production processes in working through prototyping and design stages.
- Supporting business expansion into new markets, notably China and elsewhere in Asia.
- Improved cost control and supply chain management.

IFS has enabled Spang to quickly get the information required to make business decisions faster. “We can put together a financial pitch faster than we would be able to otherwise,” says Buddemeyer. “We have been able to go fast, respond faster, and deliver faster to the market since we implemented IFS. He adds, “Our entire company is running IFS. Our warehousing, manufacturing facilities, sales staff—they are all running it.” Spang has 400 employees in total, of which 285 currently are users of IFS.

IFS has been well received among Spang’s users, Buddemeyer says. “It’s progressively easier to use and easier to work with in every version we have upgraded to. Our users never care particularly much for change so there is always initial resistance, but come back three to six months after we have finished an upgrade and users are almost universally happy with the changes, and can’t imagine using the old version.”

Two users echo that view. “I am much happier now that we have IFS and we have the control plans, it makes my job so much more interesting and so much more fulfilling because I can actually do things and help the company and help our customers,” says Frank Fitz, Quality Manager, Magnetics. “Everything we do is within IFS, and it makes life much more simple for me to be able to answer the customers’ question when they call in, and therefore there is less stress, the customers are happier and that’s really what our job is all about,” adds Audra Gallaher, Customer Service Manager, Magnetics.

Benefits seen using IFS

- Significant time-saving, leading to measurable cost saving
- Faster time to market
- Improved and enhanced production processes
- Supporting business expansion into new markets
- Improved cost control and supply chain management



“IFS is absolutely vital to the future of our organization. I can’t imagine how we would operate without it.”

Brian Buddemeyer, Spang & Company



The future horizon

Since starting with IFS, running most modules offered at that time embracing finance, supply chain and manufacturing, Spang was running IFS Applications 7.5 SP6 until upgrading to IFS 9 beta (through its membership in IFS’s Early Adopter Program), the final version of which was released in May 2015.

Looking ahead, Buddemeyer sees business intelligence as an exciting opportunity for Spang to help decision-makers key in on what is important to them as the company evaluates changes they want to make, things they want to do to be more competitive in their markets.

“IFS is absolutely vital to the future of our organization,” states Buddemeyer. “I can’t imagine how we would operate without it.”

Buddemeyer notes Spang’s 120-year history of evolving to meet the requirements of its customers and the challenges in its markets. “In today’s market place,” he says, “being able to adapt is absolutely critical to the success of our business. It was critical to find an ERP system that could evolve with us. We have IFS.”

Find out more

Further information, e-mail info@ifs.com, contact your local IFS office or visit our web site, ifs.com

