

ULTRA-DEX

Case Study

Arch Global Resolves Scheduling Priority Battles

Facts at a Glance

Challenge: Scheduling – Need to Improve On-Time Delivery Performance

Solution: Protected Flow Manufacturing™

Industry: Industrial Cutting Tools



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The Challenge:

The main challenge was the need to improve on-time deliveries in spite of a serious backlog of overdue orders. One specific area of need was also to somehow resolve the production scheduling priority battles that occurred when both make-to-order and make-to-stock jobs fight for similar shop floor resources.

The Results:

Since implementing PFM, ULTRA-DEX has witnessed a major improvement in on-time delivery. In fact, a substantial benefit was achieved within weeks of the business unit’s go-live with PFM.

“In the beginning of January, we were over one hundred jobs overdue,” recalled Jeff, who explained that these jobs were two to three weeks behind schedule. **“At the end of January, we had just 40 jobs overdue. A month later, we were only 14 jobs behind and these jobs were only one or two days behind. We’re running jobs through the plant more efficiently,”** he concluded.

Greater efficiency has myriad benefits down the line for ULTRA-DEX. At the time of writing, management is considering reducing its quoted customer lead times, reducing overtime, and lowering stock inventory.



“We are working to get our Make to Stock quantity from a six-month quantity down to a four-month quantity because we feel that we’re more nimble now,” declared Jeff. ***“We can come back in around on the schedule more easily than in the past.”***

ULTRA-DEX is both a Make to Order and Make to Stock plant. People and machine resources are shared, thus helping the company scale and compete more effectively in the marketplace. However, conflicts between these shared resources can delay customer orders if they are not managed properly.

One of PFM’s main benefits to ULTRA-DEX is how it has clearly prioritized jobs scheduled for Make to Order and Make to Stock. ***“PFM clearly lays out the priority,”*** said Jeff. ***“It’s all built in there. I’m not saying that ULTRA-DEX is the most complex business unit in the world but we do have shared people and machine resources. So, decisions do need to be made.”***

PFM resolves resource conflicts by clearly showing which job/workorder is most important to be worked on right now, in real-time. Both Make-to-Stock and Make-to-Order workorders use the same prioritization method. In this way, PFM ensures that manufacturers like ULTRA-DEX can speed up the flow of work and consistently deliver more jobs on-time.

Additionally, PFM promotes better flow on the shop floor by controlling how many jobs to put into Work in Process (WIP): ***“We don’t ‘kick’ [release] all of the jobs to the shop floor at once, like we used to,”*** said Jeff. ***“Putting too many jobs onto the shop floor prematurely burns up machine time. You utilize capacity before it needs to be used by putting all the jobs out on the shop floor at once,”*** explained Jeff. [Editor’s note: For more information on this last concept, Google “Little’s Law”]

About the Company

Ultra-Dex is a division of ARCH Global, a family of 16 companies with 22 US production facilities in 13 different states.

ARCH Global is a group of companies that collectively manufacture high quality cutting tools for industry. ARCH Global utilizes CNC turning, CNC milling, CNC grinding, centerless grinding, surface grinding and a comprehensive set of secondary and finishing operations to produce high quality cutting tools and instruments for industrial, dental and medical applications. Materials range from high speed steel, cobalt, carbide, stainless steel and other substrates with various coatings available.

ARCH Global prides itself on the high quality work of its skilled associates, the strength of its brands and the breadth of its product offering.



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