

The Challenge of Expanding Operations



COARC is a non-profit advocate of the rights and well-being of people of all ages with developmental disabilities. Based in Mellenville, N.Y., the organization has sponsored a wide range of programs designed to meet disabled persons' special needs to maximize each of their abilities in order to lead normal, independent lives.

Included is trade skill training, provided at COARC's contract manufacturing facility. This modern structure boasts 40,000 square feet of work space, including 18,000 square feet dedicated to warehousing. COARC operates 14 custom injection molding machines that generate assembly, decoration and packaging work for more than 150 people with disabilities. Confident in the success of the program, COARC management recently decided to expand operations to become a full-service custom injection molder. But the organization soon found that the shift would not be easy.

"For many years, COARC was treated strictly as a training workshop. However, in observing the program's success, we began to change our way of thinking," said Rick Mattice, COARC logistics manager. "We wanted to become a genuine manufacturing facility. What we found, though, was that technologically, we weren't up to speed, having performed shop floor functions manually for more than 35 years."

Overcoming Barriers

Throughout the training center's history, all shop floor operations had been tracked on paper, increasing the likelihood of inconsistencies in production monitoring and inventory control due to human error and oversight. What's more, one of the inherent challenges associated with employing the developmentally disabled was gambling on an unpredictable workforce, which made scheduling as reliable as a coin toss. To make a successful transition to full-service operations, COARC needed to implement an automated software system that could capture accurate production data and inventories.



ROI at a Glance:

COARC is a non-profit advocate for people with disabilities. The organization operates a full-service injection-molding facility that was able to achieve significant return on investment within the first year of using DTR Plastics, including:

- A successful transition to full-service operations.
- More accurate production data.
- Educated scheduling decisions that meet customer demands and offset unpredictable worker output.
- Increased customer satisfaction.
- Consistent fulfillment of customer orders.
- Complete control over inventory management.
- A procedure roadmap for becoming ISO registered.

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— *Rick Mattice*, Logistics Manager, COARC

Specifically, COARC sought a highly functional enterprise resource planning (ERP) system to allow management to make educated scheduling decisions in order to meet customer demand.

“As we switched our mindset to function as a real manufacturing shop, we not only decided to take on more business, but also more complex business. In order to function more efficiently, we needed to become a lot more structured,” said Mark Farinella, director of COARC assembly and molding. “While some of us had worked with ERP systems in the past, the systems were complicated and provided functionality we didn’t need. We began looking for something that wouldn’t make the process complicated so that we would actually use the system.”

“Putting a new software system in place was shaping up to be a major expense,” said Mattice. “We spent the better part of a year researching, looking for something that was molding specific and could be integrated into our assembly operations. Then we discovered DTR.”

DTR, is a comprehensive manufacturing, distribution and financial management solution designed to address the unique requirements of plastics processors. DTR is configurable to match varying business processes and profiles with plastics-specific functionality for all aspects of manufacturing, including scheduling, inventory management, costing, materials requirement planning (MRP), and executive information systems (EIS).

“Now I automatically have a complete picture of every customer and every open sales order, and I know exactly how much I’ve shipped against each job,” Mattice continued. “Previously, this would have been calculated manually. Often, people would miss deductions on the quantities that sales orders had remaining on them, which kept us constantly in discussions with customers to determine whether or not we still owed them product or if the purchase orders were complete.”

“We now have much more visibility and accuracy in tracking materials coming in and out of the facility. I can see the total picture for every job we have open,” added Mattice.

Scheduling Helps Find Balance

Another challenge COARC faced was inconsistent staffing and irregular work habits. Some days 1,000 pieces would be assembled and the next day only 100 pieces would be completed. Yet, operating under government regulations for the handicapped can mean putting the needs of the participants ahead of customers. However, to remain viable, the organization needed to consistently fulfill customer orders.

According to Farinella, DTR’s scheduling functionality has allowed management to better predict and control production to offset unpredictable worker output and balance employee/customer needs.

“Scheduling has been key in increasing our efficiency,” he said. “Our participants have a better outlook to know what’s coming and what to prepare for. We are also more prepared to meet the demands and timeframes that our production customers place on us.”

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Participants Reap Benefits

Prior to implementing DTR, participants in the skill training program would spend hours repeatedly counting inventory at the end of each month. Now, COARC has been able to gain complete control over inventories. DTR automatically calculates conversion quantities and relieves inventory in the base unit of measure. This allows participants to enjoy more free time to pursue other opportunities. Farinella explained, "We can either offer participants more training on their current job functions or train them on other jobs—something they might be able to do in the future."

Next Goal: ISO

In transitioning to full-service operations, COARC set a goal of targeting more complex custom molding markets. Specifically, the organization wants to make deeper inroads into the medical industry. To aid in that effort, the organization began implementing procedures that will help them become ISO registered. According to Marcus Dolan, director of COARC quality assurance, those procedures were structured around DTR's functionality.

"The medical industry demands quality systems that are recognized worldwide. ISO is one of the few quality assurance programs that have that recognition," said Dolan. "To become ISO registered, you need a solid structure upon which to base your procedures. DTR is a very good base for that structure, and all of our procedures are written with that framework in mind."

"We've set our sights on achieving ISO registration early this year, which will have a positive effect on our business," Dolan continued. "Even beyond the medical industry, companies that are ISO registered seek suppliers that are also ISO registered, making the process highly important for our success as an authentic company."

About Consona ERP

Consona Corporation is a worldwide leader in providing customer relationship management (CRM) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) software and services for companies of all sizes. Consona serves more than 4,500 customers worldwide and across a variety of industries.

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