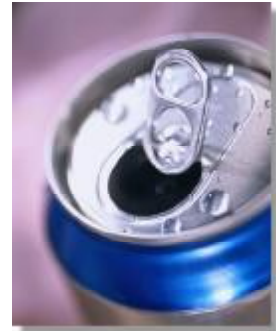


ICRON in Food & Drinks Manufacture



Food & Drinks Manufacture is an exacting business. The characteristics of multiple products and pack sizes, fluctuating demand, perishable raw materials and finished products and, strict standards in hygiene presents a serious challenge for production planners. The complexity of product and materials combinations and the need for batch size and sequence optimisation, brings special requirements. An

effective planning system must be capable of responding rapidly and flexibly as the situation changes. Manual processes are time-consuming and inaccurate and traditional code-based planning and scheduling software works poorly in this environment – it is too rigid to cope with the levels of change and complexity. In frustration, planners often return to manual planning techniques, with significant consequences for the company's bottom line.



Limitations of code based systems

The fundamental problem with traditional code-based MIS is that every manufacturing plant is different in layout, scope of work and processes. It is practically impossible for the software programmers to predict every process variation and difference in work style in the world. This means that the “best fit” is never a true fit and the gaps compromise the system performance. The user will see this as slow system operation, inaccurate plans and, at worst, requires planning outside the system.

Traditional code-base MIS provides a “best fit” to reality, but this is never a true fit.

The gaps compromise system speed and performance.

As time progresses and processes change, operators usually find it too time consuming, disruptive and expensive to adapt the software to reflect the changes. So the gaps between actual reality and system reality become larger, to the point when the system can become unusable. In these circumstances, users usually decide to go through the disruption and cost of replacing the system with another. And so the cycle repeats.

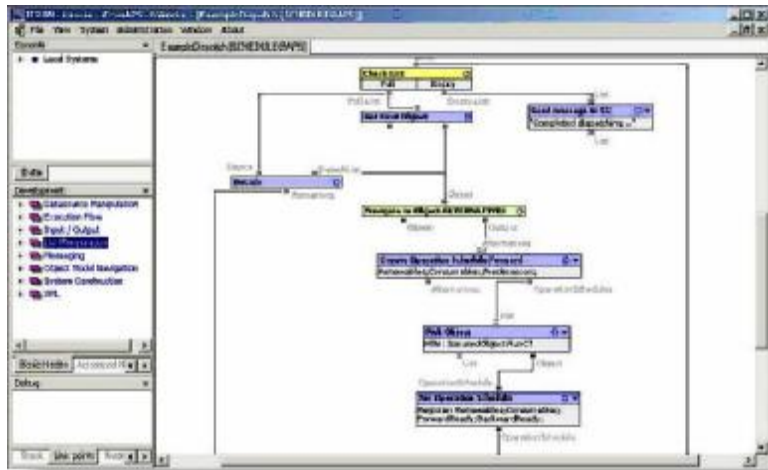
As time progresses the reality gap widens to the point where the system can become unusable.

The ICRON solution

ICRON recognised the limitations of code-based algorithm writing early and identified the need to generate process models and algorithms in free form. The solution was to develop a fast graphical modelling tool which has become ICRON's Graphical Scheduling Modelling Algorithm System (GSAMS). By combining a sizable library of standard planning algorithms, developed over the years, with the ability to edit and create new algorithms, ICRON develops tailored customer packages in short times and where the system and process realities are perfectly matched. This provides users with a platform that takes care of 100% of the planning requirements and with complete confidence that plans are realistic and achievable. The system is fast in operation and if the processes change, it is quick, cheap and easy to update to reflect the changes, keeping it relevant and fully functional.

ICRON turned conventional thinking on its head.

Instead of trying to outguess every process and work style, it developed rapid planning algorithm writing technology that can be applied to any planning requirement.



ICRON graphical planning algorithm

System interface

The final performance of every planning system is limited by the quality and timeliness of the data that feeds it. Recognising this, every ICRON system is also a point-to-point web server. This allows ICRON to receive data via the intranet or internet, close or remote. The ICRON GSAMS technology gives ICRON complete freedom to interface with virtually any electronic source, be it fixed or portable. Combined with ICRON's high processing power and ability to handle complexity, this results in timely, fast and accurate plans.



ICRON's "bPort" web link facility allows authorised users to access the latest ICRON charts and reports from any web enabled pc.

ICRON in Food & Drinks Manufacturing plants



For Food & Drinks Manufacturing plants, ICRON offers a pc based platform, web linked to all relevant data sources and work areas in the plant. It can also be linked to other ICRON systems in associated facilities and outsourcing plant locations. This gives planners and management full real-time visibility over all operations covering both detailed planning & scheduling as well as a high-level view over operations co-ordination. The resulting plans and schedules co-ordinate plant operations at a macro and micro level according to business priorities and drivers set by management. Systems can be developed, installed and fully operational in two to four months, speeding up performance improvements and investment returns.

Benefits for operators in Food & Drinks Manufacturing

ICRON provides:

- a Improved real-time visibility over all operations;
- a Improved dynamic visibility over capacity and thus ability to take on work;
- a Fully optimised batch sizes and sequence dependent set-ups;
- a Improved materials and finished goods inventory control, releasing cash tied up in stock, increasing stock turns and reducing wastage;
- a Improved logistics and distribution control, enabling "just in time" operation;
- a Optional capability to automate materials, logistics and distribution control, including use of B2B protocols;
- a Ability by using scenarios, to determine work done in-house or outsourced;
- a Increased capacity by operations smoothing and de-bottlenecking;
- a Virtual elimination of unplanned line stoppages;
- a Resulting improvements in productivity and reduced dependency on overtime, reducing unit operating costs;
- a Improved quality from reduced overtime working and a more balanced workload;
- a Ability, by scenario analysis, to determine best set-ups and work options, maintenance periods etc, allowing continuous business process improvement;
- a Improved visibility over work completion dates and thus more reliable delivery forecasting resulting in improved customer relationships and a competitive edge.



Benefits for Planners in Food & Drinks Manufacturing

- a ICRON generates accurate and thorough plans and schedules in a matter of minutes, so re-scheduling operations when circumstances change, (e.g. manpower or space constraints, equipment failure, new priorities etc.), is quick and easy; planners and managers remain on top of the situation whatever happens;
- a Real time vision and thus control over all operations virtually eliminates the need for “fire-fighting” and provides more time for planners and managers to focus on business and process improvements;
- a Scenario analysis capability allows planners to research better ways of operating in a safe environment and with high levels of confidence that the resulting plans are realistic and achievable. This changes the planner from number cruncher to a trusted adviser to management; a more challenging and rewarding role;
- a ICRON can interface to any shop floor or remote data collection system, existing or planned, speeding up the flow of reliable and timely information into the planning system and improving the quality and reliability of the planning analysis.

