

# Medical equipment company finds clinical IT solution for Lean operations



**Talley Group, makers of medical equipment, had expanded their product range and markets rapidly in recent years and needed very specific operational requirements from their IT. Talley's Tyrone White tells *TM* why the business chose Microsoft Dynamics AX delivered by MS gold partner and Lean manufacturing solutions provider eBECS.**

**MATCHING** information technology to a business's needs can be straightforward. Often though, a business has very particular needs – a big, diverse product range; a rental business that requires product tracking; or the need for the IT solution to incorporate Lean manufacturing criteria, like waste identification. The best solutions can then be narrowed down to a special few, who are not always the obvious tier one ERP vendors.

Talley Group manufactures a large range of medical equipment products for global healthcare markets from its Romsey, Hampshire base. Its core products are pressure ulcer prevention and therapy products, including dynamic alternating pressure mattresses. The product range has expanded to include negative pressure wound therapy devices and dressings, TECcare antimicrobial fluid technology, specialist pillows and duvets and more. The product expansion has been driven by success in all healthcare markets and Talley have direct sales and service operations in the UK along with distribution partners in most European countries, and the US. The company now boasts a 50 strong product range in six geographical markets, with over 10,000 individual items rented to its two core customer markets, the NHS and private institutions like hospitals. It is now in its 55th operating year.

In early 2009 Talley, supported by Microsoft gold partner eBECS, implemented Microsoft Dynamics AX, its Lean manufacturing module, and the eBECS rental module customised to Talley's requirements. When it went live with the Lean module on October 5, it became the world's first company to operate AX 2009 with Lean manufacturing.

Tyrone White, manufacturing manager at Talley Group, has 15 years experience of Lean manufacturing and had overseen the transition of Talley in to a Lean business. The time came to consider changing its incumbent ERP system, Epicor's Vantage, and Tyrone and his team explored the options rigorously. They visited Convergence, a demonstration event for business IT solutions, and tested several options. "We looked at different applications and Microsoft AX really fitted all of our functional requirements for the business. It is familiar with the office interfaces because its MS and it also offered the Lean principles that we were looking for."

He continues: "We needed the benefit that a modern Lean system would offer the business. So finding an organisation that had experience with Lean to help us introduce a Lean system was really important. Then there was the opportunity of having AX that would give us full end-to-end visibility on the reporting side that we needed to go that little step further with our customers and improve the business."

Other strong features of the Microsoft AX product were:

- **Mobile-based system** – eBECS-developed handheld devices. "These scan products delivered in the field, which feeds data back into the system with the installer's details and where he is. A real-time record of what's going on," says White.
- **A strong front end CRM system** – eBECS had some CRM experience the other vendors didn't, regarding its Lean module.
- **Reporting and ROI** – more analysis enables customers to see more clearly what they're paying for, especially when renting equipment.

- **Good usability** – "Among all the packages we saw, MS seemed to have what we were looking for."
- **Has freed-up time so key people can get on with business growth.**
- **Cost was very competitive.** "All ERP solutions are ferociously expensive in isolation, but factor in the measurable return on investment and MS AX came out on top."

## Why eBECS? Lean expertise

eBECS has a background in Lean manufacturing software consultancy, as well as experience in the medical equipment market. Microsoft bought Lean Enterprise for Microsoft Dynamics AX from eBECS, whereupon the partners created the Lean Centre of Excellence. "That in itself shows to us their commitment to Lean manufacturing," says White. The Centre, a virtual resource for the Microsoft partner community, serves as an educational outreach and training facility for companies that need training on Lean capabilities within MS Dynamics AX so as to further Lean projects within their companies. This venture and eBECS' experience of Lean manufacturing was a big draw for Talley Group. Its Lean module has fulfilled the main waste identification and removal criteria that Talley had specified.

One of the key 'dealmaker' factors for Talley was that eBECS was able to develop their rental module to support their specific requirements. "The Microsoft AX out-of-the-box rental module is good but it didn't really offer us all of the functions we needed," says White. "We did a separate project with eBECS to write a totally new AX-based rental module. We got



the opportunity to really tailor the package to exactly what we and our customers needed and eBECS then pretty much designed and built that themselves." It was a joint venture, and the investment from Talley, while significant, was minimised because eBECS has ownership of the design architecture. This module can be adapted to future customers' needs.

White is delighted that the Lean-enabled MS AX solution has perfectly matched the company's needs and sees several more business benefits in the future including enhanced reporting and quicker invoicing. "It has actually been a really interesting experience because I think it is the first time I and the company have had this much commitment from a provider to get a programme off the ground," he says.