



At a Glance:

- Composites manufacturer, Quatro Composites, evaluated 40 MRP/ERP solution providers and picked Plex for its multi-location ease of access, scalability, low 10-year TCO, and positive reviews from existing customers.
- Plex has enabled the company to go from a spreadsheet-based manual data entry system to an automated data collection system for recording, managing, and accessing production information, requiring little to no operator input.
- Plex provides a central, integrated system that can manage Quatro's business as well as store all data, providing the basis for analysis and reporting across the organization—from the shop floor to the top floor.
- The company plans to grow the number of IntelliPlex builders by 50 percent over the next year to exploit additional Big Data sources and make custom dashboards and reports available to sales, engineering, and marketing.

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About Quatro Composites

Quatro Composites is a contract component manufacturer and developer offering a full line of services including design, analysis, prototyping, and production of advanced composite structures. Quatro specializes in the aerospace, medical, and industrial markets, taking small parts typically made of metal or other materials and converting them to carbon fiber composite—producing parts that are lighter, safer, and stronger.

A facility in Poway, California, operates as the primary engineering and technology center for Quatro. The company's corporate administration, manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution are located in Orange City, IA. Quatro has expanded eight times in 10 years in order to accommodate 25-50 percent year-over-year growth, with the largest expansion in 2012 when the company doubled its manufacturing space.

Why Plex?

The company inherited an IFS ERP solution from its sister company but soon realized that the solution didn't meet the company's needs. An exhaustive search began in 2012 with a list of 40 ERP/MRP solution providers that was culled to 15 based on a scored comparison of feature/function, and then pared down to three finalists that were asked to do an onsite demo and presentation. During the demonstration, Quatro was impressed that Plex provided "everybody with the same ease of access," including employees in remote offices and on mobile devices.

The Plex cloud-based architecture enabled Quatro to avoid a significant up-front investment which minimized 10-year TCO and provided the scalability required by a business with such a rapid pace of growth. Interviews with existing Plex users finalized the company's choice. The immediate requirement was to replace the ad-hoc manual system comprised of Excel spreadsheets and Access database documents with a single integrated, automated solution that could manage the entire business.

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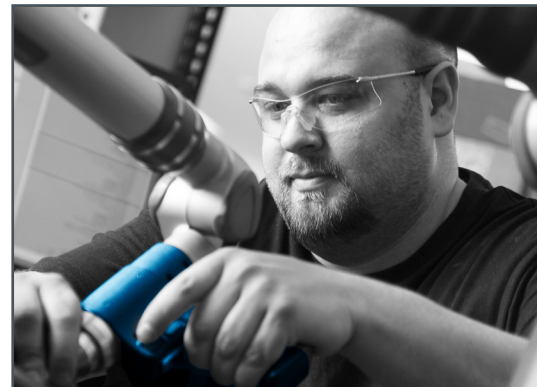
Collaboration

For Quatro, one of the primary benefits with a single cloud-based, integrated system is that it supports collaborative processes. This benefit meant that the company could eliminate departmental siloes, improve data integrity, and speed product development. Plex enables employees at both sites to have the same speed and ease of access to documents, data, and other information sources.

For example, Quatro's customer requirements for metallic to composite part conversions must be readily available for engineering to complete product design. The transfer process from engineering to production is equally important.

Customers and prospects want to see a product prototype, a "first article" that has come from the production line and is representative of the final design specifications, as well as the manufacturing process that will be used in mass production of the part. Plex enables Quatro to define the transfer process as a workflow so that the process is well defined and efficient, speeding the time it takes to get from development to prototype to final production quality without the limits of geographical boundaries.

The Plex cloud-based architecture also supports the company's rapid expansion. Well documented, shared processes enable Quatro to deploy Plex in new facilities and locations quickly and easily by replicating the same roll-out procedure each time. In fact, Quatro reported that most of the one to two month time frame associated with a Plex implementation is spent on user training.



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Analytics and Reporting

Quatro uses IntelliPlex business intelligence software to collect “as much data as possible,” and centralize that data in the Plex database so that it is visible across the company. Rather than create multiple spreadsheets to capture parts specifications, for example, the data is easily accessible and searchable. The company has created role-oriented reports and dashboards that collect and correlate information and can automatically generate reports on a daily, weekly, monthly, and annual basis.

One of the company’s goals is to reduce scrap across the organization. With a coordinated effort across multiple departments—including engineering, development, and accounting—a closed-loop process has been designed, leveraging IntelliPlex reporting to enable users across the organization to track progress and savings for continuous improvement.

The company uses a 50/50 ratio of out-of-the-box Plex reports to custom reports that track internal metrics. Users are able to create custom dashboards and reports using simple drag and drop features. It typically takes Quatro just one day to collect the metrics for a custom dashboard and another one to two days to build it.

What’s next?

Because IntelliPlex provides so much useful information and is so easy to use, Quatro plans to expand its use throughout the company and add 50 percent more IntelliPlex builders—both Basic and Master—over the next year. The company’s objective is to provide reports for everyone across the entire organization, including sales and marketing, all drawn from the same metrics and data. With greater visibility into customer trends, and even into individual customer’s buying patterns, the company can identify and address market trends as well as grow business opportunities with existing customers.

Quatro also plans to increase the use of tablets and mobile devices on the shop floor to support label printing and document control. The company’s vision is

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to have a “bank” of tablets available to employees as they clock in. Employees would use the tablets to monitor, collect, input, and review shop floor data such as inspection, quality control, production, and materials data in real time for more efficient communication. Input data would also be available immediately to print labels on-demand from anywhere on the shop floor.

Plex Web Services are being evaluated as a way to integrate with Quatro’s SCADA system in order to collect and store machine-to-machine Internet of Things (IoT) data. The plan is for all machines to be connected with Plex Web Services communicating with the SCADA system behind the scenes.

“Plex enables us to maintain our rapid growth by facilitating collaboration and communication between engineering, development, production, operations, sales, and executive management. With all metrics stored in a single place, we use IntelliPlex analytics to get the information we need—when and where we need it. The dashboards and reporting can be customized to serve virtually any role in the organization. As a result, we are making better informed business decisions that will help us meet and exceed our revenue targets.”

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About Plex

Plex is the Manufacturing Cloud, delivering industry-leading ERP and manufacturing automation to more than 450 companies across process and discrete industries. Plex pioneered Cloud solutions for the shop floor, connecting suppliers, machines, people, systems and customers with capabilities that are easy to configure, deliver continuous innovation and reduce IT costs. With insight that starts on the production line, Plex helps companies see and understand every aspect of their business ecosystems, enabling them to lead in an ever-changing market.