

Knowledge is more than just power at American Power Conversion

Q&A with American Power Conversion

Goal:

Automate the engineer-to-order process by providing American Power Conversion (APC) sales and dealers with a product configuration and quotation management system aimed at dramatically reducing the proposal time for customers, thus simplifying how APC's products are sold.

Challenge:

Implement a web-driven solution to enable APC sales and dealers, amounting to hundreds of resellers worldwide.

- Reduce quotation times
- Capture APC's complex product information and engineering knowledge
- Reduce proposal review and re-work
- Produce valid configuration and pricing
- Automate the difficult, time-consuming, and costly engineer-to-order process

Solution:

Cincom Inquiry to Order

Key Results:

- Proposal time cut from 3-5 days to approximately 15 minutes
- Elimination of proposal reviews and rework
- Cross-selling and up-selling opportunities available at point-of-sale
- Rapidly generate a professional proposal



Situation:

A \$1.4 billion provider of power protection and environmental control systems, APC's comprehensive AC and DC power solutions are designed for both home and corporate environments. Matching customer needs with product offerings is a challenge with many complex manufacturers, and APC is no exception. Tasked with supporting the rollout of a new line of power systems, APC turned to Cincom Inquiry to Order to help reduce the time it took to configure a solution, while providing a web-enabled global solution for configuration and quotation management for APC's enterprise sales and hundreds of resellers. Furthermore, APC challenged Cincom to cease manual product configuration by APC engineers, hoping to capture their knowledge and deploy it at the point of sale. E-Business Manager Soren Jensen describes how Cincom is responding to APC's many business challenges and reveals how knowledge is more than just power at American Power Conversion.

What were some of the key indicators that revealed your existing quotation management and sales processes needed to be improved?

“American Power Conversion’s new PowerStruXure solution integrates complex power infrastructure into a pre-engineered and easy-to-use system. APC’s sales team uses Cincom Inquiry to Order to produce quotes in a matter of minutes, thereby simplifying the PowerStruXure solution right through to configuration, while also helping to ensure accurate and high quality quotes for our customers.”

What organizational improvements have you seen by implementing Cincom Inquiry to Order?

“The end-game for APC is to simplify the engineer-to-order process. We want to get away from having our engineers manually configuring every order. The engineer-to-order process can be very time-consuming and expensive. It increases cost and delivery cycle time—the turnaround time is much longer than if you have everything automated and you know the variants and what kind of options you want to offer. By automating the process, we have been able to expeditiously launch new products and streamline the training of staff. For us this has resulted in the need for fewer resources in our configuration center and on our application engineering team.”

What effect is Cincom Inquiry to Order having on sales?

“The automated configurator not only increases the quality of the quotes, guiding salespeople to the best product to suit the customer’s need, it also allows for much more efficient cross-selling and up-selling. They can sell the whole suite of products in this area of business, which involves multiple product lines.”

How has Cincom Inquiry to Order improved your production capabilities?

“The configurator takes requirements and generates a solution with items, descriptions, prices – a detailed proposal. In production, we now have a clearer understanding of the customer’s need, and have quick and easy access to manufacturing instructions. The system also supplies the total weight of the system and details on production, installation, and maintenance. Cincom has helped us integrate our front-office processes with our back-office production group, resulting in shorter turnaround times for manufacturing.”

How has communication with your resellers improved by deploying Cincom Inquiry to Order?

“We have also extended the tool to our resellers. Resellers are a valuable sales channel for us, and providing them with the same application that our direct sales team is using gives us the streamlined sales process we need to keep up with customer demand, while fulfilling customer satisfaction goals.”


How is Cincom Inquiry to Order making it easier for customers to do business with APC?

“By automating the buying process, customers are empowered to learn about our offerings, configure a solution to meet their needs, and even receive quotes and shipping estimates, all in real time. For APC, we save time providing customers with product information and answering simple application questions, allowing us to optimize the knowledge of our key application engineers. Improved customer satisfaction, with more efficient selling efforts – that is what Cincom has delivered to American Power Conversion.”

“Cincom has helped us integrate our front-office processes with our back-office production group, resulting in shorter turnaround times for manufacturing.”

– Soren Jensen
E-Business Manager
American Power Conversion (APC)



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