

# Praxair Surface Technologies Expands Business and Better Serves Customers With Cincom Inquiry to Order Solution

## Q&A With Praxair Surface Technologies

### Goal:

Create a web-based, interactive, knowledge-driven configurator for Praxair Surface Technologies' TAFE Division's sales personnel and customers to serve their needs for product information, configuration options and standardized budgetary estimates.

### Challenge:

- Address the backlog of custom systems requests for estimates from Praxair Surface Technologies' TAFE division
- Reduce lost business opportunities by enabling sales personnel to rapidly develop complete and professional budgetary estimates
- Improve estimating turnaround time
- Eliminate potential inconsistencies or incorrect estimates
- Enable Engineering/Sales personnel to work on more customer/value-added activities

### Solution:

Cincom Inquiry to Order Solution

### Key Results:

- Capturing new business opportunities estimated at over \$1.5 million annually
- Producing custom system estimates in minutes instead of days
- Generating annual savings via automation of product and service information to customers
- Decreasing field service/warranty costs associated with inconsistent and incorrect estimates
- Improving Engineering/Sales focus on managing TAFE customers' most complex needs



### Situation:

*Praxair Surface Technologies is a full-line supplier of thermal spray equipment, powders, wires and spare parts. They work together with their customers to develop unique coating solutions for a variety of industrial, automotive, aerospace, printing and electronics applications.*

*Praxair, Inc., parent company of Praxair Surface Technologies, is a global leader in the industrial gases industry. Through advanced technologies in the production, supply and application of atmospheric, process and specialty gases, and the use of high-performance surface coatings, Praxair has grown to be a \$5 billion company operating in 40 countries. Praxair is making our planet more productive – helping emerging economies become more competitive in the global marketplace and helping businesses improve quality, efficiency and environmental performance while saving money.*

*Working to continue Praxair's proud tradition of serving its customers' diverse needs, Mike Hanlon, Business Analyst for Praxair Surface Technologies, turned to Cincom in addressing their custom product configuration/systems estimating challenges. With Cincom Inquiry to Order, now in place, Praxair Surface Technologies' TAFE Division is not only overcoming these challenges, but are expanding their business, reducing operating costs and serving their customers better than ever before.*

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### **What business indicators made you realize you needed to address your sales quotation process?**

We were seeing a large bottleneck in our custom systems estimating process due to high demand. The sophistication of these systems means that the estimating process is long and complex by necessity, because there are so many items to be checked. Unfortunately, this also meant that customers calling in for basic budgetary estimates were waiting too long.

### **What improvements did you hope to achieve by developing a web-based product configurator?**

Based on our analysis, we determined that speeding up or automating the process could capture an additional 8% in lost opportunities while satisfying the customer's need to receive more timely estimates and removing the unnecessary involvement of countless internal sales and engineering resources. Based on our internal win/loss ratio, we believed that this would translate into millions of dollars in revenue for our equipment sales business.

Additionally, since Cincom's product allowed us to create a web-based tool, we were able to give existing salespeople access to the tool uniformly so that they could create the same estimates for customers in the field, that once were only created internally.

### **Why was Cincom's configurator development product (Socrates®) chosen above other products in the marketplace?**

One of our key requirements for a configurator development product was that it had to be easily maintainable, intuitive and have a low Total Cost of Ownership. Cincom's product had the power and flexibility that we would expect from configurator development software, coupled with these ease-of-use features. We evaluated and graded four solutions with comparable capabilities and Cincom's software was chosen unanimously by our selection team.

### **How has the accuracy of customer estimates been improved using Cincom's software?**

The complexity of these systems can make each budgetary estimate almost an entirely new iteration. While finite, the number of options was still vast and many options were constrained against each other. When attempting to satisfy a request for a custom system estimate, it was easy to overlook a constraint, therefore, and send out an invalid configuration. To mitigate this potential problem, all estimates underwent a rigorous review process, which was very time-consuming, but necessary. Cincom's software allows us to capture the expert knowledge in our review process, constrain the product components against each other and ensure that every estimate is a valid one.

### **How are resources that were once managing customer estimate requests being better utilized?**

Since the creation of our web-based "System Estimator" tool, engineering resources now focus more time on new product development, enhancing current product offerings or working with customers to optimize their equipment for their specific coating applications. Also, sales resources (both internal and external) are now able to use the new tool to create accurate estimates in just minutes, improving response time to customers by over 500%.

A good example of this was illustrated recently when one of our most senior sales executives was lamenting at 4:30 p.m. that he needed to generate two proposals by the end of the day's business. He knew it was impossible since it usually takes a day and a half to generate a full proposal. One of our configuration managers overheard the conversation and suggested using the new online configurator. Reluctantly, the sales executive was shown how to navigate the system and was surprised that he intuitively knew how to use the application. Within 15 minutes, he had both proposals completed!

### **Describe the implementation and subsequent professional services that Cincom provided in helping Praxair make this initiative a reality?**

There were two critical factors to implementing our project within the shortest time frame: the simplicity/intuitiveness of Cincom's software and the abilities/knowledge of its internal team of professionals.

Utilizing less than 20 days of consulting time, primarily from one outstanding Cincom associate, we were able to implement our configurator in only 3.5 months (from final acceptance to product launch). This fast time-to-market allowed us to come in on budget and start realizing the financial benefits of the goals mentioned.

We definitely appreciate and recognize Cincom's ability to offer professional services that give us real value; in a marketplace where every dollar counts.



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