

Progressive Turf Uses SYSPRO to Enhance Efficiency

"Aligning the company along LEAN principles using SYSPRO's highly configurable modules forced us to become more efficient. That resulted in many improvements, including a turnaround in staff morale, disciplined purchasing procedures and better cash flows. We now deliver our product on time, and we consistently meet our customers' schedules."

Chris Meier, Plant Manager, Progressive Turf Equipment



■ The Company

Progressive Turf Equipment manufactures and markets pull-behind Tri-Deck Rotary Finishing Mowers ranging from 10 to 36 feet in cutting width. Known for rugged design and heavy-duty features, Tri-Deck mowers are used for sports fields, golf courses, general grounds care and sod farms as well as for municipal applications involving wide areas where a high-quality after-cut appearance is mandatory.

Progressive Turf's history began in 1977, when company President Luke Janmaat opened Luke's Machine Shop Ltd., a modest agricultural repair business. The company's first pull-behind Rotary Finishing Mower was introduced in 1990, the same year that Luke's Machine Shop created Progressive Turf Equipment Inc.

Today, after several plant expansions, new products continue to be introduced. With its head office and manufacturing plant in Seaforth, Ontario, a distribution facility in Kentucky, and dealer networks across Canada, the US, the UK and Europe, the company's basic marketing strategy is to offer thoughtfully engineered and reliable products to the turf maintenance industry.

■ The Challenge

Progressive Turf installed SYSPRO enterprise resource planning (ERP) software in 2000. It wasn't until early 2005, however, when Chris Meier joined the company as Plant Manager, that SYSPRO's potential was realized. Meier had prior experience implementing ERP systems, and recognized that SYSPRO was being substantially under-utilized.

"At the time, our accounting system was still a manual spreadsheet program, and it was not keeping up with the growing complexity of our business," Meier says.

Within its manufacturing facility, Progressive Turf has more than 3000 SKUs in three warehouses. The company makes 18 different mowers, from domestic to export machines. Some of those models have 300 parts, with a build schedule up to six levels and a through-flow that takes three to five weeks.

■ AT A GLANCE ■

COMPANY

Progressive Turf Equipment

INDUSTRY

Automotive:
▪ Specialist Vehicles

THE CHALLENGE

- Manual accounting system, unable to keep pace with company growth
- Complex manufacturing environment
- Inefficient processes

SOLUTION & SERVICES

- Bill of Materials
- Work in Progress
- Material Requirements Planning

THE BENEFITS

- Enhanced efficiency
- Improved staff morale
- Disciplined purchasing procedures
- Improved cash flows
- Product consistently delivered on time
- Reduced potential for error
- Accurate inventory
- Streamlined processes





“Getting all 300 parts for the week of assembly used to be a major task, and we didn’t have the systems in place to pre-plan,” Meier says. This was exacerbated by the fact that some of Progressive Turf’s European suppliers have six-month lead times.

“The old system was very difficult to work with, and every review of our build schedule had to be done manually. This created many challenges between shop floor staff and purchase agents. When you add in unnecessary expediting and extra freight costs, the inefficiency of our processes was creating a very real reflection on the bottom line.”



■ The Solution

Meier became SYSPRO’s internal champion, spearheading a program to implement numerous new modules and re-forge the company’s production, supply chain and financial operations along principles set out by the manufacturing efficiency paradigm commonly known as LEAN.

“We realized that if we wanted to progress, we had to make changes to our business processes. Aligning the company along LEAN principles using SYSPRO’s highly configurable modules forced us to become more efficient. That resulted in many improvements, including a turnaround in staff morale, disciplined purchasing procedures and better cash flows. We now deliver our product on time, and we consistently meet our customers’ schedules,” Meier says.

Progressive Turf began the process by creating and reviewing its Bill of Materials (BOM), and by making sure that the associated costs and routings were sound. Once management was certain that the company understood its manufacturing and supply chain costs, Meier was able to ensure that selling prices made sense. “This meant automating our selling structures in relation to the various schemes we had for selling our products. Once all these processes became automated, the potential for error in both production and supply chain was enormously reduced,” he says.



The next step was to implement the Work In Progress (WIP) and Material Requirements Planning (MRP) modules. SYSPRO MRP lets Progressive Turf know exactly what is required in terms of finished goods and raw materials. This creates efficiencies on both sides of Progressive Turf's business: the mowers themselves; and the thousands of spare parts required for after-sale maintenance. MRP not only keeps the shop floor equipped with just the right number of parts for production, it also keeps Progressive Turf's off-site warehouse properly stocked with spare parts.

Once Progressive Turf closed the loop on its manufacturing and supply chain processes, everything flowed through to the financials. Now comfortable that the underlying information from inventory and sales was accurate, the company was able to make improvements in the purchasing cycle and negotiate better contracts with suppliers.

To further improve its efficiency, Progressive Turf also automated its document flow process. Once a job is opened, workflow tickets are issued to the shop floor, telling production staff exactly what to do and exactly where to find the necessary parts through the suggested job and supply chain actions.

■ The Result

Before implementing SYSPRO, Progressive Turf was constantly fighting fires. There were shortages on the shop floor and out-of-stock items. Now, the company builds to a forecast schedule based on economic batch quantities. Once Progressive Turf decides what it needs to produce, the system makes sure that everything is where it should be when it's needed. In addition, the company is better able to schedule work, manage its shop floor, control inventory, and co-ordinate with its suppliers.

Since implementing SYSPRO around LEAN principles, Progressive Turf has managed to reduce its work in process and raw inventory by 50 percent - despite the addition of four new mower models. "In this new environment, we're able to decrease inventory, add new products, and streamline our processes," Meier says.

Janmaat agrees. "With the new modules in place, we can now devote more time to other issues, such as new product development and production. We know that SYSPRO will control all aspects of our scheduling, and we now have the latest information at our fingertips, with reduced manpower. SYSPRO also allows us to have reduced inventory levels, which in turn provides us with more manufacturing space. Without SYSPRO we could not be as efficient as we are now. This system will definitely help us grow."