Industrias Estra S.A.

Company Facts

▶ Location: Medellín, Colombia
▶ Industry: Plastic injection molding manufacturer
▶ Web site: www.estra.com

Success Highlights

Challenges
▶ Monitor and measure plant performance in real time for better decision making
▶ Eliminate manual, paper-based systems for data analysis
▶ Reduce errors with access to up-to-the-minute plant floor data
▶ Standardize plant floor performance measurements

Solution
▶ Epicor Mattec MES

Benefits
▶ 19% increase in OEE
▶ Single system for collecting and processing information
▶ Gain accurate plant floor data in real time
▶ Identify downtime issues with root cause analysis

Industrias Estra S.A. was founded in 1953 by Erwin Strauss. In its early years, the company manufactured small toys including buttons for toy clothing and pioneered the use of plastisol for manufacturing toy balls.

Throughout the following decades, Estra integrated household products to its portfolio to market to the home goods industry. For example, in the seventies Melamine Melmac dishes were introduced and the first molds for plastic baskets were imported from Germany, becoming the first company to produce these items in Colombia. In addition, in the eighties the company launched new games like Yo-Yos Russel, Battleship and 'Estratalandia.'

Today, Estra continues to leverage new opportunities to create strategic alliances with international companies that complement its product portfolio. With this, and the hard work of its employees, Estra maintains its day-to-day leadership in the plastics sector in Colombia.

"Today, we are a brand that generates innovative solutions that constantly meets the dynamic needs and aspirations of our customers," says Juan Camilo Posada, operations manager for Estra.

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Paving the way

Estra has always been a very active company in the market. Its leadership is the result of decades of innovation and adoption of new technologies. As part of the company's commitment to stay ahead, Estra frequently visits international fairs for the plastics industry where, for several years, they were aware of the evolution of manufacturing execution systems (MES).

"It was always on our wish list, but because of the cost and scope of the solutions, the time had not come to do it," says Posada about selecting a MES solution.

For several years the company evaluated solution vendors in the UK and Germany; they reviewed proposals, costs, scope of work, and software options and services. It was at the K Fair 2010 where they met a representative from Epicor who provided a comprehensive overview of the Epicor Mattec MES solution capabilities, including a look at product screen shots, customization options, modules and reports, among other features.

There were many features that convinced Estra to make the decision to select Mattec. Posada highlights the solution's high-quality graphical interfaces, and the ability to easily customize fields tailored to their plant's specific requirements.

"The open architecture allowed us to integrate with our ERP solution and include documentation from our quality system," Posada says. "Furthermore, the provision of technical support, although not formally in Colombia, and the fact that we always have an answer to our questions, has made us never feel alone."

Ensuring project success

From the start of the project, Estra received clear instructions and detailed plans for how to connect Mattec to each of its injection molding machines. After completing the directions provided, a solution representative visited Estra to ensure the system was installed and configured properly, as well as train the team members.

"Installation started in the first half of 2011; from that moment on the system has become the IT hub of the plant," Posada says. "The biggest challenge was not only the installation of the physical infrastructure and software, but the transition from a manual to an automatic production data culture. This was a training process, and thanks to the intuitiveness of Mattec the learning curve was easier."

Among the production control features that Estra has implemented are real-time dashboards for instant plant floor monitoring, Machine Interface Units (MIU) to drill down to machine-level details, scrap and downtime reporting, dynamic job scheduling, and more – all of which interfaces with their ERP system.

Incorporating Mattec into Estra's daily operation brings many benefits. Posada highlights consolidating information across for the entire plant into a single data source. In addition, the company has been able to accurately identify downtime issues with root cause analysis, allowing them to develop strategies to reduce and ultimately resolve them. "It is such a powerful tool that, when implemented, it becomes a new plant lifestyle," adds Posada.

"The quality of the system, real-time information management, performance metrics, ease of use, and the continuous improvement opportunities since using the system, are just some of the reasons why I would recommend Mattec. It is a powerful tool that we use to analyze issues and demonstrate measureable performance improvements."

Juan Camilo Posada , Operations Manager | Estra

Additionally, Posada refers to the ability to accurately measure and calculate overall equipment effectiveness (OEE): "The first OEE values were between 58% and 60% and now we are approaching 72%."

Challenges overcome, a role model

The successful transformation of automating production management at Estra has allowed them to leave behind the days of when information was generated in paper-based reports and analyzed in stagnant spreadsheets. "Today we have a single system to collect and process information for the entire plant," shares Posada.

Furthermore, the company is using real-time data to make better decisions, while also measuring plant performance more effectively based on the results of key metrics such as OEE.

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About Epicor

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