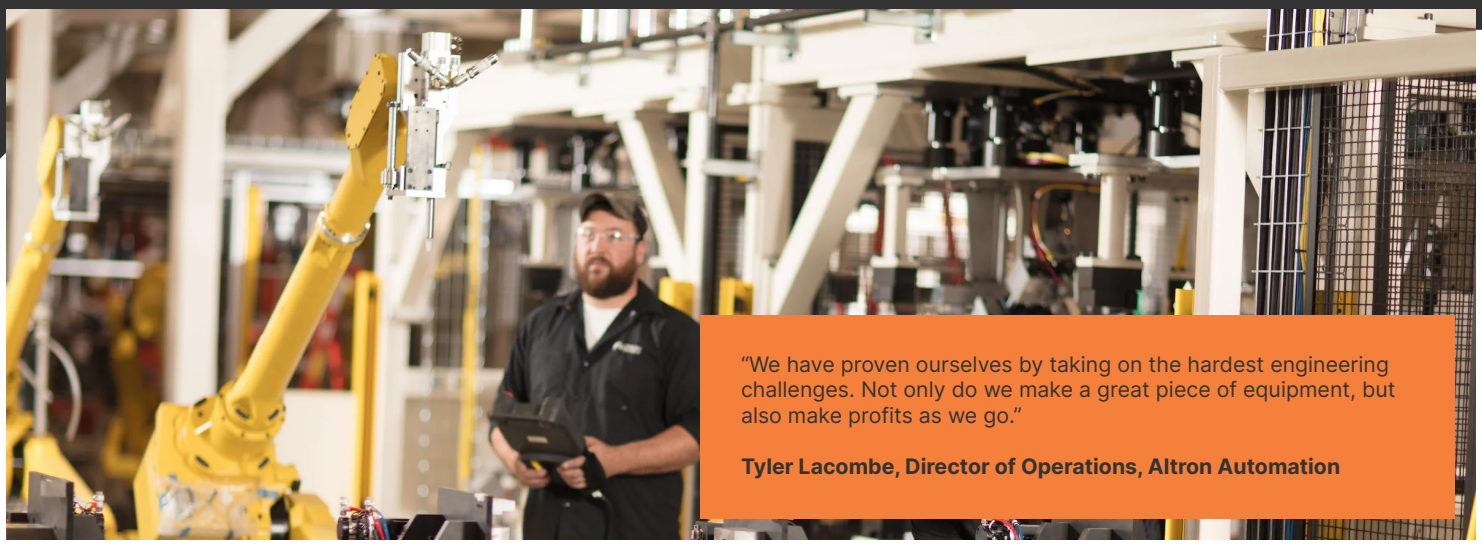
Success Story
Altron Automation

INDUSTRIOS SOFTWARE, INC.



"We have proven ourselves by taking on the hardest engineering challenges. Not only do we make a great piece of equipment, but also make profits as we go."

Tyler Lacombe, Director of Operations, Altron Automation

Altron Automation Achieves Precision and Cost Savings

ALTRON AUTOMATION

The confidence the organization now has in the data is surprising.

Tyler Lacombe, Director of Operations, Altron Automation

Confidence in the data makes an impact at Altron Automation, Hudsonville, MI.

Succeeding in the manufacturing sector is a tricky business, because sometimes it's difficult to measure what success actually looks like. Are your order books full? That's a good start. Yearly revenue on an upward trend and employee turnover rate very low? All good things, and any leader in a manufacturing company would look at these results and rightly think that the business is doing well.

STAYING INTEGRATED

That was the situation for Tyler LaCombe, Director of Operations at Altron Automation, an automated manufacturing systems integrator in Hudsonville, MI Business was humming and the manufacturer had settled into serving two main business segments: automated systems to build reinforced plastics parts primarily for heavy truck production; and manufacturing solutions to build automotive seating systems for Tier-1 automotive leaders. The latter segment has been an area of growth for Altron, which is evolving from seating assembly to providing full robotic transfer and other secondary equipment required for advanced manufacturing.

"This is what sets us apart from a lot of our competitors that typically use outside design partners and subcontract the CNC machining of components or outsource quality assurance – we do that all in-house," explains LaCombe.

Altron even handles the purchasing of robots and tooling, shipping, on-site installation and commissioning. Every project is a full turn-key project, and they are never easy.

That's not easy to do when the standard workflow is to start with a blank piece of paper, and 24 weeks later finish up with a fully commissioned, multi-million dollar assembly line with all the fixings.

Success in this type of structure is far from guaranteed. Even with a full slate of orders and an engaged workforce, securing that ever-elusive profit margin requires steadfast discipline and an unwavering commitment to timeline and project management. At Altron, every project that comes in the front door is given a project manager that stays with the job through to completion.

COMPANY
Altron Automation

WEBSITE
www.altronautomation.com

INDUSTRY
Automated manufacturing systems integrator

CHALLENGE SUMMARY

Still tackling job closeouts is the major focus for Altron, but since updating their Industrios ERP, the company has solved several key sticking points:

1. Greatly reduced purchasing, receiving, and pull/return activities that resulted in better utilization of inventory
2. Increased data accuracy/timeliness in job cost, which has driven savings while jobs are in process instead of after completion.
3. Ensuring inventory accuracy via cycle counts
4. Daily reports on purchased components sent to the shop floor

"People are looking at opportunities in all sorts of places we never used to, which is great because it drives actions. It has shone a light on some areas that have always been a little broken but no one really knew. The confidence the organization has in the data is surprising – it has led to a lot of good decisions and improved processes that have simplified our work flow."

Tyler Lacombe, Director of Operations, Altron Automation

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Even with this level of commitment, challenges remain. "We are still struggling with job closeouts, as well as getting back to the discipline around tracking time and materials on a more granular level," says LaCombe, who adds that Altron's senior management decided a good place to look for solutions to these challenges was with a long-standing partner – Altron's enterprise resource planning (ERP) software supplier.

Industrios Software Inc., is an Oakville, Ont.-based software engineering firm focused on developing advanced ERP solutions for discrete manufacturers in a number of industries. For Altron, Industrios was a natural fit because the software offered many modules that help manage and measure project-specific workflows, something a generic, off-the-shelf ERP provider struggles to accomplish.

Another important consideration is preparing for what most experts predict will be a wide adoption of Industry 4.0 and Industrial Internet of Things (IIOT). But before you get to the stage of implementing IIOT, you must have a solid ERP capturing the data IIOT feeds on.

"We decided we needed to become a more ERP-centric company," says LaCombe, who trusted that an update on their previously installed Industrios software would provide the answers they were looking for, while being a more cost-effective solution than starting from scratch. Altron's relationship with Industrios originally started back in 2002, but since then, a lot has changed for the automated manufacturing systems integrator. That has resulted in a number of challenges for LaCombe, who became re-focused on getting further gains from an updated ERP system.

"That was my big challenge – how do we get where we want to go using what we have?" says Lacombe.

He says the update helped repair that foundation, and now everyone gets excited about the kinds of reports Altron can make and the kind of information it can generate with Industrios.

"People are looking at opportunities in all sorts of places we never used to, which is great because it drives actions. It has shone a light on some areas that have always been a little broken but no one really knew," says Lacombe. "The confidence the organization has in the data is surprising – it has led to a lot of good decisions and improved processes that have simplified our work flow."

INDUSTRIOS SOFTWARE, INC.

IndustriOS Software, Inc.

2115 South Service Road W - Oakville, ON L6L 5W2
Tel (905) 432-3877 - Fax (905) 829-3349

sales@industrios.com
www.industrios.com