

IBM Product Lifecycle Management is perfect fit for SNUGTOP's time-to-market challenge



IBM PLM is helping SNUGTOP get to market faster with products like the Super Sport, shown here on a Ford F-150 Super Crew pick-up truck.

Overview

- *Time-consuming manual design and prototype processes were causing SNUGTOP products to be late to market, ceding share to competitors*
- *IBM PLM solutions allowed SNUGTOP to automate previously manual processes, saving time while maintaining product quality and design*
- *SNUGTOP products reach the market several weeks earlier, protecting market share. Future automation of additional processes will cut time to market even more.*

Delays cost market-leading truck top manufacturer's sales

Truck buyers across North America know that when it comes to stylish truck caps and tonneau covers, nothing fits like a SNUGTOP.

California-based SNUGTOP achieved its enviable position with designs painstakingly hand-surfaced by master craftsman. But the very process that made SNUGTOP the standard for sleek design quality created delays that threatened its share in today's time-sensitive market.

"If buyers have to compromise on a competitor's product because ours isn't on the market yet, they may do that," says Rick Kovacs, Design Engineer for the entire SNUGTOP line of products. "The point is not to force the customer into that choice."

"It's worth everything to our business to be out in the market sooner, and CATIA V5 is making that possible."

– Rick Kovacs, Design Engineer, SNUGTOP Custom Fibreglass Manufacturing Co.

IBM Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) automates manual processes

SNUGTOP traditionally spent four to six weeks hand-shaping a blank to serve as the mould for a truck top. The time-consuming process, however, meant that SNUGTOP was occasionally beaten to market by more automated and less detail-oriented competitors.

Despite scepticism in the company that quality and design could be maintained using modern Product Lifecycle Management techniques, Kovacs decided to try. Unfortunately, the company's initial mid-grade software selection couldn't handle its sophisticated curved surface design requirements.

Desperate for a solution, Kovacs investigated CATIA V5 design software, developed by Dassault Systèmes and marketed and supported by IBM as part of its IBM PLM solutions portfolio. As the automotive industry's de facto standard Kovacs knew CATIA V5 could do the job, but he expected the cost to be beyond SNUGTOP's reach.

"We were really surprised at how affordable it is, especially now that CATIA V5 is available for Microsoft® Windows® and the way IBM is packaging it for small businesses through IBM PLM Express," Kovacs said. "Plus it can grow with us. With our former package, once you bought it that was all you were ever going to have. But CATIA V5 has all of these modules that allow you to expand."



To market faster and better with IBM PLM

Since adopting CATIA V5, SNUGTOP now uses a combination of automated and manual processes that produces the first mould in two weeks, rather than four. Moulds for related products are ready as little as a week later.

"What I really like about CATIA V5 is that it has a lot of automation tools like Powercopy," Kovacs said. "Once you come up with a solid design – like the side windows in one family of tops – all you have to do is copy it and adjust

the size to make that same piece for a different truck. Drag and drop, boom, done. What took me two hours to model the first time can be copied in a matter of minutes."

The system also allows Kovacs to take a finished design for one family of truck tops and modify it to create the designs for other families. "If I model an Xtra Vision, all I have to do is add windows and I've got a Super Sport. Then all I have to do is add the bumps on top of the shell and I've got an XTR. That's three designs for the price of one."

Potential for even more efficiency

As his experience with IBM PLM grows, Kovacs is increasingly comfortable doing even more of the work virtually rather than with physical prototypes, which will cut even more time from the design process. Best of all, the company's sales force has begun to believe as well.

"The shells for the new Nissan Titan were the first products we designed on CATIA V5 and we got a lot of good reviews," Kovacs said. "The sales team is beginning to have confidence that we can really do what we say we can. That's critical to getting the support we need to continue to grow our capabilities."

For more information, contact your IBM Marketing Representative, IBM Business Partner or visit the IBM PLM Web site at:

ibm.com/solutions/plm



IBM Eurocoordination

Product Lifecycle Management
Tour Descartes
La Defense 5
2, avenue Gambetta
92066 Paris La Defense Cedex
France

The IBM home page can be found at **ibm.com**

IBM, the IBM logo, ibm.com and the On Demand Business logo are trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation in the United States, other countries, or both.

CATIA® is a registered trademark of Dassault Systèmes.

Microsoft and Windows are trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States, other countries, or both.

Other company, product and service names may be trademarks, or service marks of others.

Any reference to an IBM product, program or service is not intended to imply that only IBM products, programs or services may be used. Any functionally equivalent product, program or service may be used instead.

This publication is for general guidance only. Information is subject to change without notice. Please contact your local IBM sales office or reseller for latest information on IBM products and services.

IBM does not represent or warrant that its products or services ensure compliance with laws. Clients are responsible for compliance with applicable securities laws and regulations, including national laws and regulations.

Images courtesy of SNUGTOP.

Photographs may show design models.

© Copyright IBM Corporation 2005
All Rights Reserved.