

BROADWATER MOULDINGS HELPS SPEED TIME TO MARKET FOR MEDICAL DEVICE CLIENT WITH ACTIFY SPINFIRE PRO

Actify's Design Visualization Software Helps Trim Six Months From Projected Project Time

Broadwater Mouldings Limited is owned by the prestigious Betts Group, UK-based leaders in production services for products ranging from custom mouldings, to accessories for commercial vehicles. The Betts Group produces mouldings, signs, air deflectors, toolboxes, and cab-top sleeper conversions. Its two primary business units are Hatcher components and Broadwater Mouldings, both highly respected with more than 35 years collective experience. At both companies, they constantly review new developments in fibreglass manufacturing processes and emphasize the use of the best practices for design and production.

Manufacturing of Fiberglass Components Requires Early Design Access For Just-In-Time Production

Virtually all the components produced by both Broadwater and Hatcher are made of fiberglass (GRP) and similar materials, but the companies serve a very different set of clientele. Broadwater Mouldings was split off to focus on the custom moulding market, especially the high-quality end. Broadwater clients often have unique design and production needs. In recent years their products have included:

- specialised switchgear cabinets for Cable & Wireless
- body panels for Sports Cars
- post boxes for the Royal Mail

- septic waste tanks
- material handling chutes for the UK Post Office, Siemens Dematic in Germany, the UK and Austria and AEG in Germany
- machinery covers for companies in the medical and printing industries
- and medical equipment covers.

Broadwater is engaged very early on in the design process and continues to be involved throughout the production process. Working closely with clients from many industries worldwide, Broadwater begins its work during the initial design stage, through production, often with "just-in-time" schedules. In order to deliver quickly and efficiently, Broadwater runs its own pattern making shop, specialist moulding shops, and trimming shops.

Cad Systems Prove Too Costly, Complex Compared To Actify SpinFire

Because Broadwater's work is in designing and producing specialised products, it must fully understand the intricacies of its clients' designs. However, as a production and manufacturing partner, Broadwater must also provide project managers, who are not CAD experts, the ability to converse freely with the design team to ask questions and offer comments on the design.

While the project managers are certainly technical enough to become adept in Pro/E, Catia, or other high-end packages, using these packages carries a substantial cost in both project time and purchase price.

Typically Broadwater's largest customers expect each of their designs to last three years, with a one-year design cycle. Since a product life span is relatively brief compared to its development time, shortening the design time is critical because it improves the time-to-revenue ratio. When one of its major customers, a major medical equipment maker, initiated a new product life cycle, they asked Broadwater to bid.

ACTIFY SPINFIRE SELECTED FOR MAJOR DESIGN PROJECT FOR MEDICAL DEVICE MAKER

"We were in the initial stages of a fairly major project, and we needed to either purchase viewing software or a small CAD system for the project manager to use. We asked Martyn Davies of Datranet, our reseller, to quickly help us evaluate our options," said Vincent Mortlock, the Commercial Manager for Broadwater. "After careful evaluation of our needs, Datranet recommended we use a viewer rather than a CAD system."

For the project at hand, Broadwater's customer wanted to take an existing, mature product and completely change the look of the equipment, with improvements to both form and function. The challenge for Broadwater was to provide design input and expertise for the in-house team without slowing down progress.

"We needed to see and comment on detailed designs, but the project manager was not a CAD expert, so we needed software that was more accessible than a full CAD system. In the past we had received files in an interchange format, such as IGES, but felt that wasn't good enough," said Mortlock.

ACTIFY SPINFIRE PROVES ITSELF FASTER AND MORE VERSATILE THAN FULL DESIGN SOFTWARE

Broadwater uses Pro/E and other full scale CAD systems in its design work, but felt the time and training required to use a full set of design software would be too great. They considered using a scaled down version of a design package, such as Pro Desktop, but decided other packages weren't as versatile or as accurate in quickly viewing the surfaces or working with solid models as was SpinFire Pro. Even design engineers that use Pro/E on a daily basis found SpinFire Pro to be faster and more streamlined than using a full CAD system.

"Many companies ask the customer to provide IGES or Pro/E designs when they are bidding. This can slow things down considerably. Broadwater was able to turn around iterations on a daily basis, and the speed and commitment we showed helped us win the business. SpinFire Pro played a major role in that," commented Mortlock.

"SpinFire Pro is so fast and versatile that it allows us to section up a design and take out the pieces very easily to get a better view. We can publish and share CAD data in .3D format. As a result, we can make constant improvements without losing any time."

ACTIFY SPINFIRE BECOMES DAILY NECESSITY

During the course of this design, Broadwater used SpinFire Pro every day. With complete and instant access to the detailed designs, they began by generating machining tools for the A surfaces, and could simultaneously start on the B surfaces. Previous

similar projects had taken in excess of 12 months, but this one was complete in half that time, due to the use of CAD and SpinFire Pro.

"Many medical devices cost more than £1 million each, and speeding time to market is critical. By shaving six months off a project we can enable our customer to capture substantial additional revenue. Our work on this project cemented the long-term relationship," said Mortlock.

Another advantage of SpinFire Pro has been its portability. Whether by email or in face to face meetings as required, Broadwater is able to mark up portions of the design very quickly using much smaller files with SpinFire. This has been a significant tool in customer presentations and meetings.

"Having SpinFire Pro and knowing we can view the designs quickly not only made us more productive, but it also showed a commitment that our customers appreciated. Even the design engineers who know Pro/E inside and out are impressed with SpinFire Pro. It was well worth the investment we made," says Mortlock.



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