

You've got nothing to lose... ...we've got nothing to hide.

Finding your next ERP/MRP system doesn't have to be an ordeal, if you've got a couple of hours to spare!

Written by Guy Amoroso, MD of 123 Insight Limited

Since the launch of 123insight at the NEC's Computers in Manufacturing Exhibition, November 2000, a significant and growing number of Small to Medium Enterprises (SME's) have broken with the exhaustive (and mostly exhausting!) procedures normally associated with the selection and buying of a manufacturing system - why?

In previous published articles about our work, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the key advantages that our system offers over traditional modular systems:

- Rental means no capital outlay
- Minimal training (only 6 days)
- Minimal implementation consultancy requirement (only one day - yes it's true!)
- Rapid implementation - often measured in days
- Quick and easy access to any information
- No binding contracts or minimum rental period - our statement of confidence

Customer satisfaction is cited by a number of excellent case studies, some of which have been the subject of 'editorial' review in trade publications and have either been commended or have won outright several leading manufacturing awards. Business results year on year have been absolutely incredible with new name customer licences being added at an ever accelerating rate!

Surely there must be an army of highly trained, highly paid salesmen and pre-sales consultants and a marketing team to achieve such results? Not really as it happens, in fact we have no salesmen as such, just system demonstrators. Management guru Peter Drucker's view is that a good product, properly marketed doesn't need 'selling' and we are proving him right!

When all of our competitors are swimming one way and we are swimming in the completely opposite direction, it's sometimes difficult to maintain credibility when what we are really saying to prospective customers is, "we're the only ones that have got it right". In many respects, it's analogous to the well-known phrase of 'the poacher has turned gamekeeper', given that I had 20 years doing the traditional systems sales job!

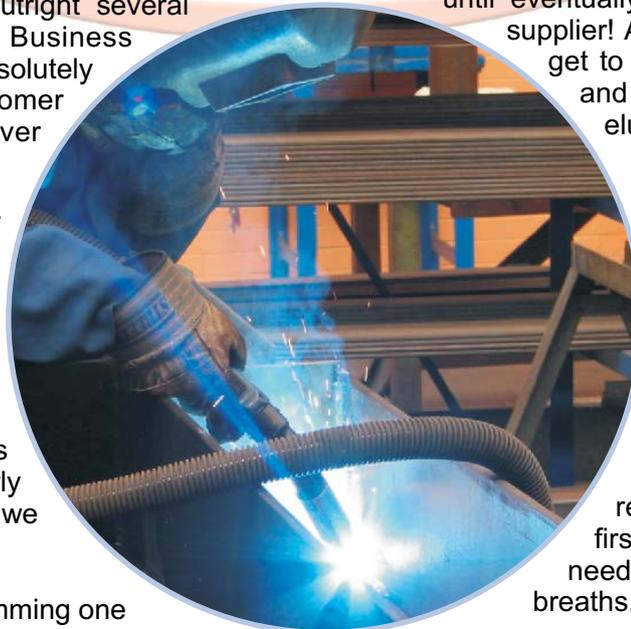
Perhaps another way to look at it, is that we are doing something as revolutionary in our sector as the budget airlines did to the traditional airlines a few years back. There is, however, one major difference; namely, that whilst our prices are low, the quality of product and services delivered to our customers, is actually far superior to the traditional supply and implementation of manufacturing systems.

So what is it that the prospective customers see in our unique approach and why are they so readily attracted to us? To answer this, one has to look at the exhaustive procedures that are inescapable in buying a traditional 'modular' system. This can literally take months and absorb a great deal of the valuable and productive time of staff and management. For many, this fact in itself is enough to put the project indefinitely on the back burner!

To start with, you'll need to identify anything between 10 and 30 'possible' ERP/MRP vendors and then whittle them down via meetings, assisting them to understand your business and attending demonstrations, then further whittling down via proposals, references visits and final negotiations - and this is just the summary - until eventually you choose the 'preferred' supplier! All the while you are trying to get to grips with a complex subject and arrive at what are mostly quite elusive selection criteria.

The real costs of this exercise can run into many thousands of pounds (typically equivalent to two or more years of our systems rental), not counting key people's attention being diverted away from their important, sometimes critical, day-to-day responsibilities. That's just the first hurdle, however; now you need to take two further big deep breaths.

The first is the amount of money that you will now have to part with - remember it's only an outright purchase decision that you have been able to make! The second deep breath, and make it a big one, loaded with resolve and determination, is that you now have all of that supplier training and consultancy to contend with as you take your first steps on the implementation of something that will take months or, quite often, years!



Having previously worked in the traditional systems market for many years, I perfectly understand and endorse this approach to their selection because, until 123insight was created, there was no other choice! The traditional extensive checking and double-checking is necessary because of the inherent huge risks, particularly with the large sums of money, the burden of the customers' time-commitment on the project and what if it all turns pear-shaped?

The 123insight approach is truly unique because the time involved from the client in direct contact with us, is typically between 3 - 6 hours in order for them to make their decision to use our manufacturing system. But surely, aren't they risking their businesses by failing to conduct due diligence on such an important matter? The following results from our customers prove otherwise and support calls average about one call per customer, per month - so how do we do it?



Company	User License	Days to go live
ANM Electronics	3	15
Creasefield Ltd	13	40

The 123insight approach removes the apprehensions of the 'buyer' and automatically creates an atmosphere of mutual openness, confidence and trust.

Apart from the quality of the system itself and its suitability for the many varied requirements of our customers, the biggest single factor to achieve this non-pressured, relaxed, yet professional commercial atmosphere is the fact that we do not use contracts to tie our customers down.

The traditional systems sales concept of high pressure 'closing' of the prospect simply does not work and cannot be applied to our commercial approach. We don't even provide sales proposals; instead it's just a simple, two-minute job for customers to register for using our system.

To illustrate the point, one of our customers exclaimed after much head-scratching, "I get it! - you're not actually trying to sell us anything, you're just showing us your system and asking if we'd like to use it."

In a nutshell, that's exactly right! - this particular customer was replacing a 32-user traditional modular

system from a high-profile supplier and the evaluation time spent directly with us was just 6 hours! Another customer, replacing a 30-user bespoke system, for use over three locations, simply attended one of our popular Evaluation Workshops - and registered without us ever having been to their factories. 123insight is a commercial approach where we provide prospective customers a well-structured demonstration and review of the system and our implementation methods in just 2 ½ hours.

Everything we do as a business is to the point, all prices for software and services are published, thus providing a sound basis for the hard-pressed manufacturing executive to easily make a decision.

Customers are encouraged to ask as many questions as they like and they readily appreciate that we have nothing to hide and there is little to be gained in providing anything other than the straight answers!

As Jason Holt, MD of Creasefield Ltd commented, "123insight is a great way of spending money on your business - it's cost effective, reliable and provides a great breadth of functionality. It just works."

The commercial flexibility has also allowed a number of customers to adopt a 'pilot' approach. Typically, starting with anything between 1 to 5 licences and by attending the 6 days of training, customers can actually prove the system before complete implementation within their companies. This is something that the traditional systems suppliers and the prospective customer would find impossible to do due to the substantial amount of training and consultancy required.

With just 6 days of training required and use of the system starting at only £164 a month, the customer really can't lose and, more times than not, is able to be up and running with 123insight in less time and cost than it takes just to select a traditional modular system!

At the risk of sounding old-fashioned, the only traditional element in our business is that we provide software that works and, very importantly, our approach quickly delivers identifiable costs savings that traditional systems rarely do!

**Advanced
Simplicity**®

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