Goal:
To increase the number of manufactured products while streamlining the process from order-taking to manufacturing and delivery, effectively giving Mills Display the key business differentiator of in-house capability and customised solutions.

Challenge:
• Integrate 11 different systems involved in the administrative process
• Address each aspect of the business, from sales to production and HR to financials
• Eliminate multiple entries and decrease the steps needed to process an order by half
• Maximise trading and purchasing opportunities
• Empower all staff to quickly and accurately address customer inquiries
• Accommodate users with a wide variety of technical skill levels

Solution:
Cincom’s Priority™ ERP software, designed specifically for small to medium-sized manufacturers

About Mills Display:
Located in Melbourne, Australia, Mills Display is a leading manufacturer and supplier of display and point-of-sale solutions covering areas such as scan stripping, food display, display accessories, electronic labeling solutions, retail support, acrylic manufacture and signage. Established in 1985, Mills Display has 60 personnel with office and warehouse facilities in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, and a network of distributors throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Profile in Success: Mills Display

Cincom ERP Solution Helps Mills Display Turn Dreams of Business Growth into Reality

Reduction in business costs and expected growth in revenues to deliver ROI in the next few years

Situation: Mills Display stocks more than 3,200 products in warehouse facilities in three different cities. These products are a mixture of imported products, locally made products and custom-made solutions manufactured by Mills. Mills Display wants to increase the number of products it manufactures and provide more customised solutions for its retail customers. After evaluating nine different vendors, Mills selected Cincom’s Priority ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) solution, a solution designed particularly for small to medium-sized organisations.
Expand Business. Reduce Costs.

“By complementing our ready-made items with custom-built products and by reducing our ordering and fulfillment process, we have expanded our business and reduced costs at the same time,” said Robert Mills, Founder and Managing Director of Mills Display. “With this combined benefit, we expect to see a return on investment in the next few years.”

“Our goal is to take ownership of the products and develop many in-house,” said Mills. “The ability to manufacture custom-made solutions to meet our customers’ individual requirements is an important differentiator for our business, which includes complex wholesale, retail, showroom, import and manufacturing operations. “To be successful, we need to streamline the process from order taking to manufacturing and delivery – we and our customers need to be confident that the right product has been ordered, that it is being manufactured to specification and will be delivered on time. Many of our competitors can’t tell what’s in stock and what’s available and we want to build on that competitive advantage. Cincom allows us to meet our specific industry demands with Priority.”

Manual System Limits Growth

Mills Display was using a DOS-based financial package and a range of Microsoft® applications to support its business. Most of the IT systems in its various departments were not connected, so staff could not easily share information.

“We had more than 11 different systems involved in our administrative processes,” Mills said. “We needed a solution that would bring all the business process information under one roof, so we could share it across the different departments and cut down on the double entry of information and potential for errors.

“Our business plan commits to doubling the percentage of revenue contribution from manufacturing in five years, which means a fourfold increase in manufacturing volume. It is just not feasible to do this with a manual production system.”

“We want to make manufacturing a bigger part of our overall business so we can focus on making our products unique. We needed an ERP system to manage that type of manufacturing and supply environment.”

– Robert Mills, Founder and Managing Director, Mills Display

Industry Experience – Key to Selection … and Success

Mills Display evaluated nine systems including SSA Max, Epicor Vantage and Pronto, before opting for Cincom’s Priority. The selection process was managed by Mills Display’s IT Manager, John Webster, in association with Julian Josem, of Affable Technology Services, who was contracted by Mills Display to assist in the evaluation and selection processes.

“We chose Cincom because the company best understood what we needed and knew how the software could meet those needs,” Mills said. “Cincom knows the manufacturing environment and can offer active, expert help in developing that side of our business, as opposed to just providing software. The industry experience of their people means they are able to suggest improvements to business processes and new ideas, and already they have been pro-active in doing this.”

Cincom’s Priority solution covers all aspects of a manufacturer’s business including sales, customer relationship management, planning and scheduling, engineering, purchasing, inventory control, production, project management, human resources, costing and financial management. It is easy to use and maintain, affordable and flexible.
User-Friendly Interface Addresses Organisation-Wide Needs

Priority’s web interface is also particularly important to Mills Display. “The Priority interface was more user-friendly than the others, which is important when people with different levels of technical skills will be entering information into the system,” according to Mills. “Also, Cincom provides far more customising out of the box than other solutions, which means we avoid the cost of custom programming. General features such as queries, shortcuts, data input methods and interfaces, can truly be customised to suit our needs. The end result is a product built for Mills, not for anyone else.”

“We use our internal screens to enter and modify the information we need, and then Priority serves it live to whoever needs it. We can design and write the structure, behaviour and presentation of the objects used, which allows us to, for instance, take a lead from marketing or sales and deliver it to our clients without ever leaving the system,” said Webster.

“With Priority, we can add whole families of products to our system which are not only tied in nationally to production and warehousing through bills of material, but also to Sales for pricing and availability, Marketing for product development and the Web for our customers to buy. Not one line of additional code needs to be written to handle a new product being added, which helps keep the content fresh without IT having to own what is really the responsibility of marketing and sales.”

Mills said resiliency and integration have been key factors in Priority’s success for the company.

“Recently, we lost our database and our entire Priority installation when our hardware supplier gave us incorrect instructions for repairing a degraded RAID array. Using the install CDs and backup tapes, we had the system available again in less than 45 minutes.

“Priority also makes it much easier to create and implement pricing structures for different categories of customers and products, which was becoming a real challenge for us,” he added. “Any staff member answering a customer’s query can provide the correct information and follow up as needed, without having to use multiple applications or passing the query on to another staff member, so the process is faster and less training is required.”

Geared for Mills Display and the Future

With the focus now shifted to increasing production, Mills is building other beneficial features into Priority, including enhanced product descriptions, multiple product images, better reporting on order status and automated shipment notifications.