

Securing expertise in an international market with PDM

PRO.FILE at textile machinery manufacturer FONG'S EUROPE

- PRO.FILE creates a central repository for textile machinery expertise
- Two separate PDM systems from two different sites merge to form a unified PLM platform for a unified company
- PRO.FILE also holds material certificates and release reports for machines



Textile machinery manufacturer FONG'S EUROPE uses PROCAD's PDM/PLM system PRO.FILE to reorganize the way it manages its product data. The results include consistent item master data across CAD and ERP and current and valid production documents such as BOMs and drawings. The company also benefits from the fact that all relevant documents are brought together as a single work order in a single digital location from where they can be easily retrieved.

Headquartered in Schwäbisch Hall, Germany, FONG'S EUROPE GmbH is a member of the Chinese FONG'S Group, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of CHTC-FONG'S Industries Company Ltd, a publicly listed company headquartered in Hong Kong. The company is the world's largest textile machinery manufacturer for the wet finishing industry with more than 95% market penetration and 5,000 employees generating revenues of approximately €360 million. >>

FONG'S EUROPE (115 employees) was formed with the acquisition of Germany-based companies THEN and GOLLER and Switzerland-based XORELLA, all of them companies with a long tradition that have driven innovation in the development of groundbreaking textile finishing technologies over the past decades. In addition to THEN's forward-thinking Airflow technology (see below), the company's other brands also focus on researching and developing new technologies that when compared to conventional machinery, can drastically reduce processing times as well as the use of water, energy, and chemicals.

The PDM system as a single product knowledge repository

In order to be able to instantly access this wealth of product knowledge for each order of a highly customized textile finishing plant, the European companies acquired by FONG'S have long relied on PDM/PLM solutions. Today, the textile machinery manufacturer has shifted production to Shenzhen, China and Schwäbisch Hall, Germany. The group's entire range of machinery is built at both sites, with Shenzhen servicing the Eastern and Schwäbisch Hall the Western Hemisphere. "FONG'S decision to continue and likely expand production in Schwäbisch Hall is partly owed to the fact that the 'Made in Germany' label is simply highly valued by customers," explains Volker Hilsenbeck, engineer and PDM project manager at FONG'S EUROPE.

The PDM system provides a central repository for all the knowledge and expertise the company has on a particular product e.g. from development, design, manufacturing, purchasing or service and makes it available to all employees with the appropriate authorizations. Whether it is CAD models, drawings, item master data, bills of materials, or documents with images, text or calculation tables, they are securely stored in the PRO.FILE 'data vault'. This ensures that all product data is always up to date and consistent across department lines.

Schwäbisch Hall implemented the PDM solution PRO.FILE and integrated it with its ERP solution Infor ERP COM as early as 2002. In 2008, its ERP



Checking the roller on a GOLLER machine.

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integration in particular was moved to new, more flexible technologies. "This made it much easier to adapt the exchange of data in line with process changes or when updating the PDM or ERP system," Volker



Checking the pressure vessels on a machine with THEN-AIRFLOW technology. It uses an air cushions rather than dye liquor to transport fabrics in the machine, reducing water consumption by 75% and processing times by about 50%.



Hilsenbeck points out. FONG'S turned to German PROCAD partner CINTEG AG for support in this update scenario. CINTEG is currently also involved in integrating a team of 15 developers based at FONG'S location in Hof, Germany with the process chains at the Schwäbisch Hall location.

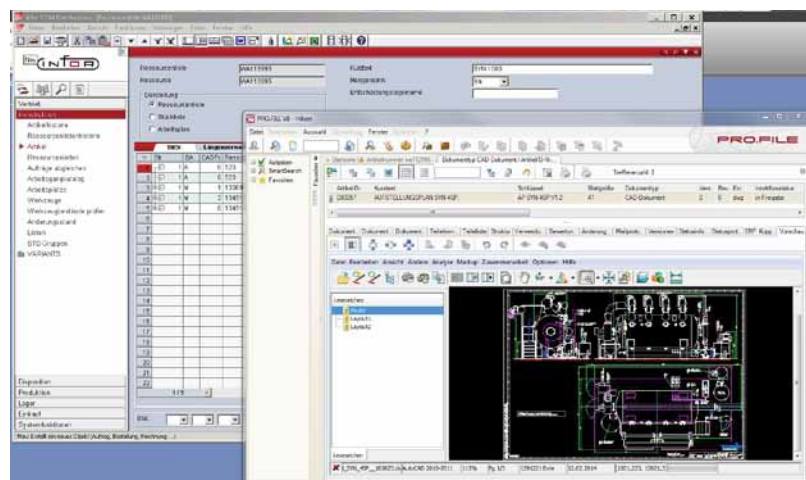
To achieve this, their legacy IT environment with komMA's ERP system and Gain's PDM solution was gradually replaced. "What was most fascinating about this was not so much the technical aspects. What was important to us was getting to work with FONG'S employees in merging the processes, data, number ranges, what's more, two firmly established products from two different companies in a single PRO.FILE system," Martin Gärtner, branch manager at CINTEG AG says. Volker Hilsenbeck is very happy with the support provided by

PROCAD's partner: "The expertise of CINTEG's PLM team was a crucial foundation for us to lean on during the transition that started in 2008. They were never far away, which helped us a great deal in solving any problems."

Valid drawings and bills of materials for flawless production

At FONG'S, PRO.FILE is running on about 50 workstations across the company's development and engineering departments, in purchasing, production, sales, service, software development, QA documentation, and machine documentation. It is integrated with a range of systems, mainly AutoCAD, SolidWorks, and Microsoft Office. "It took our engineering colleagues some getting used to no longer having to store their data on the old file system paths, but rather in PRO.FILE," Volker Hilsenbeck recalls. "But today, they

appreciate the benefits of an enterprise-wide PDM solution. Now everybody has access to the most current product data, whether they are engineers or working on bills of materials and drawings in other departments." It used to be that the drawings had to be printed out from a central location for every single department in a rather time-consuming process. Now, the drawings are available through the PDM system and a wealth of information can be directly read from the PDF drawings displayed on screen throughout the different departments. And whenever a printout does become necessary, for example during manufacturing or for the technicians assembling the machine on site, printers are now available in every department.



Managing document versions, tracking changes, and maintaining where-used lists are just some PRO.FILE features that make work easier for engineers.

" ... anyone who has ever compared bills of materials with 200 items by hand will really appreciate this feature in PRO.FILE."

Volker Hilsenbeck, engineer and PDM project manager at FONG'S EUROPE



Automatic dosing station for dyes: the dye is mixed and pumped through a system of pipes when needed.

The engineering BOMs are now also created in the PDM system and automatically transferred to the ERP system. Item master data can be retrieved both from the PDM and the ERP system. And since all data is automatically transferred, it is kept synchronous at all times. "With drawings and bills of materials that are always valid and up to date, we have laid the foundation for flawless production processes. PRO.FILE also comes with a BOM comparison feature. This can save you a lot of money and trouble," points out Mr. Hilsenbeck, "and anyone who has ever compared bills of materials with 200 items by hand will really appreciate this feature in PRO.FILE."

One-click for all documents related to a work order

Another clear advantage is that every single document related to a specific work order can be accessed with a single click. One large area supported by the PDM system is the management of certificates of

conformity. These are certificates needed for the sheet metal used in the pressure tanks of FONG'S machinery, which has to meet certain specifications regarding its compounds and melting values. Another important area includes the release reports of the machinery installed at customer sites and technician reports, which are all managed in the PDM system.

FONG'S also wanted to be able to manage document versions, track any changes, and maintain where-used lists in PRO.FILE in order to streamline its machinery manufacturing processes and provide exceptional support for years to come. "Our colleagues in Hof, who had previous experience working with a PDM system, were surprised how one click will just open the next level where a part is used," Volker Hilsenbeck goes on to name the features that make life easier not

just for engineers. With respect to document management, the integration with Office is also a „good thing“ as it allows them to, for example, open or save a document directly from within Word or Excel.

The next step will be to integrate FONG'S electrical engineering along with all of its processes and the EPLAN CAE system with PRO.FILE. This also means that PRO.FILE has come to stay. "Over the years, the structure of the company has seen fundamental changes, two independent companies were merged and became part of a large corporation. Operating systems and ERP solutions were replaced. But the PLM solution stood its ground and became the backbone for all the data needed to maintain a world-class product. This is one of the biggest advantages of PLM solutions," explains Martin Gärtner.