

Barrett increases productivity

A case study interview with Glenn Sherborne, Production Manager of Barrett's Joinery, a 27 staff business that invested in job tracking and production software in 2006.

Barrett's manufactures all forms of joinery including kitchens, cabinets, timber windows and doors and solid timber machining. Most joinery is quoted, one-off, custom joinery to clients' designs. The business employs 27 full time staff – 17 on the factory floor and 10 in the office.

In 2006, our management team decided we needed to advance our tracking and reporting of jobs and staff on the factory floor. We opted for Empower Software as it was specifically developed for our industry. The investment in cables, cabinets and second hand PCs cost us less than \$1,000.

Since then our factory staff have accessed their assigned jobs and logged start and finish on all jobs using the PCs. We also set up Empower Software on our CNC machinery screens for our CNC operators to access their assigned work.

The live production and productivity screens and reporting provide invaluable information for me in production management. The live tracking and reporting is a huge step up from our previous manual system.

We have had Empower Software now for coming up seven years. Within the first two years of using Empower we had increased our weekly factory output by 19%, with

the same staff and same hours worked. This substantial increase in weekly output and productivity enabled us to lower our labour times, therefore lower our costs on jobs, and consequently become more competitive with our quotes in our local market place. We have made good gains in production and productivity over the seven years.

One main advantage of Empower is that our factory staff now see their budgeted times on each job just before they start. So, for example, at 8 am our staff know that if they have a job with a two hour budget they must come back to the PC to finish the job on or before 10 am – that way they plan the job in their head and then they work to achieve the goal.

Our staff also know that the two hours is what we have priced the job for – so they are committed to see the job completed on budget without blow-out of time and cost.

When our staff finish each job, Empower advises them of the actual time they achieved on the job, the budgeted time and any variance in time – over or under. Displaying this to factory staff on all jobs keeps them highly aware, accountable and focused on meeting their times.

Empower tracks and automatically generates,



when selected, a one page report of summary and detail hours worked by each staff member for weekly payroll. If staff get sloppy with taking too long to start work at their benches or machines, and too long around smoko and lunch time, or they leave their benches too early at day end, then Empower reports this slippage in production time.

Empower tracks and reports a wide range of production and productivity reporting including our daily, weekly and monthly:

- times and productivity on each job and job cost;
- rework, which we benchmark month to month;
- variations logged onto each job. This enables us to determine which variations can be charged out;
- forward work, so we can see what weekly resources

of staff and machine hours we require this and next week etc.

At staff performance review time, Empower is certainly helpful to me in my role as production manager. It allows me to present each staff member with their individual Empower reports confirming their performance in terms of:

- manufacturing jobs;
- downtime jobs;
- rework;
- time and attendance.

We recently paid bonuses to a number of our factory staff based purely on their individual performance reported in Empower.

In summary Empower Software has been a very good production and labour management tool for us, enabling us, on the same staff and same wage cost, to significantly increase our weekly production.●