

How ACB uses Ucamco's Integr8tor to cut CAM process costs up to 30%

Quick turnaround orders are an important part of ACB's services to our customers. For their time-critical projects even hours matter. Our customers need to get a quotation fast and it must be accurate. If there are layout errors or other production issues they want to know upfront before more time is lost.

Historically to prepare a quotation we input and analysed board data manually. This was slow and could lead to costing errors if the engineer missed critical aspects of the board design. Layout and production issues came to light only when we ran full CAM checks prior to manufacture.

We have worked closely with Ucamco since ACB was founded more than 20 years ago. In June 2008 they proposed their new Integr8tor software as a sales solution. Using Integr8tor, we have cut the time required to prepare quotations by 50%. Our quotations are more accurate and we are able to return at least 90% of all enquiries within the tight schedule we have set ourselves. In addition our customers benefit from immediate feedback on any design or manufacturability issues.

Today when we receive a customer's enquiry we load the data directly into Integr8tor. The software automatically reads in the CAM data, analyses it and provides a detailed output of our key production and costing parameters. If data is missing or not clear or if there are potential manufacturing problems, these are flagged up by Integr8tor's analysis. We can get back immediately to the customer and work together to find a solution.

More recently we have begun to use Integr8tor as a job definition and planning tool when we receive a new order.

Our standard procedure has been to send the new order to the CAM department. Here the job has to wait until a CAM engineer is free. Meanwhile the planning department knows nothing about the job except for the delivery date. Once the job reaches the head of the queue, the CAM engineer loads the job manually, prepares the stack-up,

runs a sequence of checks to establish the key production parameters, and prepares the output tooling including the product flow through the factory. Only then does the planning department get the necessary product parameters to start planning the job.

Using Integr8tor we can obtain the same information automatically in minutes. We run the job through Integr8tor immediately we receive the data. Integr8tor is linked with Polar Instruments' Speedstack stack-up builder using Ucamco's Polar link. Integr8tor sends the data to Speedstack which creates the build and reads it back into Integr8tor. In a few minutes we know the PCB technology in detail. We can then plan our front-end operations based on facts and immediately integrate this job in the production planning. If there are technical issues they are already highlighted so that we can resolve them with the customer without jeopardising his delivery.

Using Integr8tor as a job definition and planning tool has brought multiple benefits. Our customers welcome the fast feedback and the extra security of deliveries. Our production teams get more time to produce time-critical jobs. Within the CAM department fast and accurate planning data means that we can set the right priorities. By automating the contract review stage and streamlining tool preparation, we expect to cut CAM process times and hence CAM costs up to 30%.

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ACB, based in Dendermonde, Belgium, is an international leader in design and manufacturing of Printed Circuit Boards. It has the industry's best on-time delivery record and guarantees fast and reliable services over a wide range of PCB technologies in small and medium quantities.

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