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Keith Whitehead, systems analyst,  
Paravant Computer Systems



## Paravant Computer Systems

### Made2Manage Empowers Paravant with Improved Data Visibility

"Quality design, quality production" is the policy statement at Paravant Computer Systems (Palm Bay, FL), and the company has proven that commitment to its customers in commercial, government, and military markets for more than 18 years. Paravant Computer Systems is a division of Paravant (Morristown, NJ), a global leader in rugged military computer technology, Paravant was recently named one of the top 100 defense contractors in the world, providing a wide variety of rugged computer products ranging from mobile vehicle-mounted systems to notebooks and handheld units. Maintaining high quality production processes and compliance with government standards are key challenges that Paravant meets daily with its technological and broad-based program experience.



Despite its lofty reputation, Paravant Computer Systems faced an internal challenge that might have threatened its long-term competitiveness if not addressed. While its computer products are rugged and tough enough to survive under the harshest military conditions, Paravant's information management system was discovered to be one of the company's weakest links. Paravant management brought Keith Whitehead on board as systems analyst to spearhead the search for a new system vendor and manage the implementation process. Whitehead recommended that Paravant Computer Systems engage Made2Manage Systems (Indianapolis, IN) to implement its enterprise business software.



"We looked at other competitive systems that are very much in accordance with the government specifications required for our accounting and supply chain systems, but their solutions were at least ten times more expensive than Made2Manage Systems, plus they didn't offer the flexibility we needed," says Whitehead. "The M2M Enterprise Business System was the clear choice."

In his role as systems analyst, Whitehead quickly determined that Paravant's existing DOS-based system was not providing a much-needed progressive or partial billing functionality for the company's accounting department.

"When dealing with government contracts, Paravant has to be able to process jobs and billing from several perspectives, including partial billing for customers whose contracts may run only part of the year," says Whitehead. "The old system did not support or facilitate our accounting department's efforts in that area."

Whitehead also discovered that the existing system did not support the needs of Paravant's project managers in terms of providing real-time data for accurate job costing. "Project managers need to

have access to current job costs throughout the project so they can react quickly—for example, if they see the project is going over budget," says Whitehead. "With the DOS-based system, our managers weren't empowered to see the data to make those types of timely decisions. We needed the flexibility and real-time data visibility that the M2M system offered."

### **An Exciting Collaboration**

Paravant chose the core M2M Enterprise Business System with optional bar coding capability for collecting information on the movement of inventory through a network of work centers on the production floor. The robust end-to-end information management capabilities of the Enterprise Business System empowers Paravant to track both production performance and enterprise-wide procedures with unparalleled flexibility and data visibility.

The M2M Enterprise Business System went live on July 1, 2001. "Throughout the implementation, M2M consultants were on site to help us deal with high-level timeline issues and advise us on specific ways Paravant could use the M2M software and modify our existing business processes to work with the new system," says Whitehead.

In addition, Paravant formed an internal user committee to meet with M2M consultants throughout the implementation. "It was really exciting to watch everybody working together and finding ways to adapt to the new system in a positive manner," says Whitehead. "The user committee could actually see the real capabilities of the system and that got them thinking of new ideas as to how to make things run more smoothly.

Paravant also took advantage of M2M training opportunities, initially on-site and later through online continuing education courses offered through M2M University. "Initially, we had a very extensive education plan and brought in our M2M business partner to do all of the training on-site, so we were able to cover every required course before the system went live," says Whitehead. "Since then, we have used the virtual classrooms of M2M University to address the different needs of the various departments at Paravant, as well as to bring new employees up to speed on the system."



### **Unparalleled Flexibility and Data Visibility**

Nearly one year after the implementation, Paravant users who responded to an internal survey reported that the biggest benefit of the M2M system is greater flexibility in data portability—being able to access data easily, transport it into an Excel spreadsheet, for example, or move it into a database file for further analysis. "Our people are also very happy with the ability of the system to handle the advanced reporting capabilities within different Paravant departments," says Whitehead. "As Paravant continues to grow, we find that we need to be able to generate more accurate numbers, as well as monitor the jobs, the total costs, and the profit margin at any point in time. Our accounting department can now access the data needed to facilitate partial billing for our government contracts. The visibility of key data is one of the most important benefits cited by our users and management."



Data visibility as a result of the M2M Enterprise Business System also empowers Paravant project managers to take a more proactive role. "With the new system our project managers can really do their jobs because the data is readily available," says Whitehead. "They have a much more solid foundation when managing projects and costs because they can instantly see how much has been

charged against a job at any time and use that data to effect change, if needed, in a timely manner. It's one of the strongest benefits of the M2M system for Paravant."

### **Staying Competitive with M2M Solutions**

In the future, Paravant plans to work with M2M to have some customizations written into the system to accommodate the requirements of some long-term business partners. "One valuable feature of the M2M system is that it allows us to add functionality that we need for specific capabilities," says Whitehead. He also noted that Paravant may expand the capabilities of the M2M system in-house to the human resources and payroll areas.



According to Whitehead, Paravant is also considering a field service module of the M2M system that would meet the demands of customers by maintaining data on the units that they purchase, as well as maintaining a service history throughout the lifetime of the units. "Currently, this type of data is stored in an external database, so we've started to look at the possibility of a field service module that would meet the informational requirements of the customer," says Whitehead.

The system has been running smoothly as Paravant continues to refine the reporting requirements and methodology of how the different departments will use the system. "Although I feel it will take at least a year to determine the full return on investment, right now I can tell you that some of the ideas brought up in the user committee during implementation are already taking shape," says Whitehead. "It's certainly been an exciting time at Paravant and our people are definitely able to get more work accomplished in less time because of the M2M system."

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