

## Darice Project Overview

Located in Strongsville, Ohio, Darice is premier wholesale distributor in the craft industry, serving many channels including craft, mass market, party, toy, drug and grocery stores. The company's key products lines include craft basics, jewelry making, paper crafting, bridal, floral design, fine art supplies and kids crafts.

Darice relies on a staff of Buyers, a Research & Development (R & D) Department, and a Creative Services Department to create a continual stream of new products. The R & D Department designs and develops new craft items. The Creative Services Department provides product packaging, catalogs, and photography for all products, as well as some product design.

As a leader in the craft industry, with almost 80,000 Stock Keeping Units (SKUs) to track, Darice faces specialized challenges in managing their product development life cycle.

## The Challenges

A single project at Darice might have hundreds of items. Darice needed a method to track the man-hours required for new product development in the R & D Department, as well as photography, packaging design, and production in the Creative Services Department. Uneven work flow and the inability to project workforce requirements was resulting in either under-employed contract workers, or not enough workers, particularly during peak periods of seasonal demand.

## The Solutions

Adatasol set up and customized the software program Design-On-Time (DOT) for the Creative Services Department, to schedule and track packaging design, product design, product photography, and to archive all necessary digital documents. Invoicing functions and purchase order creation are included within the Creative Services Program. Adatasol customized these functions and created custom reports to sort and report on the information being tracked.

Four years ago, as the R & D Department was expanded, Adatasol added another module to handle new product development and this department's unique project tracking needs.

The Creative Services Department usually assigns one designer to a job. Because of time constraints and project sizes, the R & D department may need to schedule as many as 10 people for one job. Adatasol was able to customize each Department's module, create and customize the screens used, and create custom reports for R & D. Adatasol's R & D DOT module includes the assignment of staff and man-hours to specific tasks within a single job, such as concept drawings, sample-building, creation of technical documents and creation of presentation materials.

One of the unique features of DOT is its capability to assign storage bin numbers for each sample item, which made retrieving samples by the Darice staff much more efficient – samples can now be stored by customer, season, and project, and retrieved easily by bin number.

In addition, the time card feature of DOT was activated and customized, so Darice can track how long each task within a job takes, and capture data on all phases of R & D to better plan future resource allocation for new product development.

In 2015, Darice installed and launched a totally new Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) software program to enable the company to capture all product related data in one place. Adatasol created a new interface between this PLM software and DOT, enabling Darice to continue to schedule and track jobs in DOT while using the new PLM software.

Adatasol provides regular technical support and maintenance as needed to maintain this PLM interface and DOT.

## Conclusion

Darice can now better forecast the man-hour requirements for new product development, as well as track the day-to-day work assignments for product design, packaging design and production, photography, and sampling.

Overhead and overtime are decreased, the peaks and valleys of freelance services costs are monitored, and the workflow for Darice's design team is much smoother and better controlled.

Darice is now able to smoothly run multiple projects and meet its deadlines, despite handling the development of an average of more than 10,000 SKUs annually.