Software – The Unsung Hero

Anne Charlton – Integrated Joinery Solutions - Supplier Nov/Dec 2013

In times past working in the joinery industry meant working with your hands; drawing, cutting and assembling units manually.

Over the past 20 years the industry has seen massive changes with automation becoming mainstream. Automation is the key to manufacturing success for Australian joiners, enabling businesses to remove manual processes, reduce errors and wastage, leading to increased productivity and profitability.

There are two main arms to this automation revolution:

- Hardware; namely the introduction of CNC machines, with nesting CNC's leading the charge in Australia
- Software; CAD/CAM software to draw, produce rendered images, workshop drawings, add machining and send to CNC machine

Gone are the days where any business can afford to be without the right CAD/CAM software. Increasingly the Australian market will need to use technology as a competitive edge over low cost manufacturing countries. The ability to apply advanced technology to manufacture better, faster and smarter will set our industry apart and lead to businesses that are able to secure their place in the market and remain sustainable.

Brains of operation

Much time and research is given to the purchase of the right machinery for a joinery business. And quite rightly as this is a major investment for the business.

But the most important decision a joinery business needs to make it buying the right CAD/CAM software. After all, software is the brains of the operation – if the software fails, then production stops.

Fraction of cost of hardware

Much is made of the price of software, but it is actually one of the most cost effective investments you will make in automating your business. Software represents only a fraction of the cost of your machinery, yet your machinery is useless with it.

In a fully automated business you are totally dependent on your software for production. Saving money by purchasing the cheapest software can be a false economy that could cost your business dearly in the long run.

Price Vs Value

Whilst price always factors into any business decision a better approach is to look at the features you need and work back. Every software solution is different, which can result in the decision making process to find the right software being both confusing and time consuming.

Trying to compare software on price alone is not enough. The best value software is the solution that caters for 100% of your business needs and removes the maximum number of manual processes. The right software will provide the productivity gains that will repay your initial investment many times over. The more expensive product may in fact represent better value for money.

Ongoing Investment

Software is not a one-off investment. The best CAD/CAM software will continue to be developed. Upgrades should be viewed positively and seen as a sign of a supplier who is prepared to invest in their software solution and produce advancements that benefit your business.

Many joinery businesses see upgrades as an unnecessary expense but our mindset needs to change on this. Upgrades are a vital way for you to keep pace with advancements in features, functions and technology that allows you to continue to improve your processes.

The right upgrades are an investment that will help your business to remain competitive into the future. If you are operating with outdated software then you stand to be left behind by your competition.

CAD/CAM software is an essential part of modern manufacturing. Using cutting edge CAD/CAM software will allow Australian joinery manufacturers to remain competitive into the future by increasing productivity and reducing lead times, errors and wastage.