

Background

Like many manufacturing organizations, this Fortune 500 apparel brand has created large volumes of product data since emerging on the retail market. From its early beginnings, the brand has grown internationally and has become widely regarded for its high-quality products, as well as its dedication to the athletic and outdoor communities. Its continued growth and dedication to maintaining high standards drove the need for a better way to track and manage manufacturing processes and data, particularly in the area of product development.

The brand's Product Development Systems Manager recognized the lack of efficiency and problems with using spreadsheets when they began looking for a more robust workflow solution.

In product data alone, this apparel manufacturer tracks and manages 80,000 lab dips for colors every season and many colors have to be submitted three times before they are the perfect fit for the product. Considering this well-known brand manages other information such as trim and size, employees spent a lot of time manually entering data into spreadsheets and the company's older database—as much as 80 hours per season.

Additionally, using spreadsheets caused other problems. For example, when an employee needed access to specific information, it was not always easy to find where the associated spreadsheet was stored, and if the person with access was out of the office, it caused further delays. The old way of tracking data and managing processes also made managers' lives more difficult because they did not have comprehensive visibility into their employees' activities.

These problems led the brand's Product Development Systems Manager to explore other options, and while it was not initially clear what features would be necessary, TrackVia stood out as a clear winner due to its short learning curve and accessibility. The organization signed up for a trial of TrackVia in 2007 and adoption has expanded significantly since then.

Other well-known brands in the corporation's portfolio now also leverage the solution, which now accommodates over 900 users.

F500 APPAREL MANUFACTURER

“The managers have a huge job because they can have 10 people reporting to them, and all 10 of these people are doing things on 10 spreadsheets—and they're doing it differently. So if you want to put everything together to get the big picture—for metrics—it's impossible. So that was the big thing I went around to the managers with: Do you want to see metrics?”

Product Development Systems Manager
Fortune 500 Apparel Manufacturer

80

Manual data entry hours saved yearly thanks to efficiencies from TrackVia.

900+

The number of TrackVia users at this Fortune 500 apparel manufacturer.

Fortune 500 Apparel Manufacturer's Solution

Change is difficult for any business, but convincing internal teams to use entirely different software is not an easy task. Particularly when shifting away from pervasive productivity tools like spreadsheets, employees may be reluctant to learn new software. Even early on, however, the clear value to employees began building enthusiasm for TrackVia's work management application.

Because TrackVia supports integration with commonly used business applications such as ERP and CRM systems, many of the manual data entry tasks have been eliminated across the organization. Furthermore, information could be imported from Excel to reduce the number of technology migration headaches the brand would have otherwise experienced.

Secure access from anywhere

Collaboration represents one of the biggest challenges for any global manufacturing organization. While employees often have to share information to do their jobs effectively, the same data could present a security risk if not properly protected.

"One of the biggest things for global usage is the ability to get on the Internet without [using a virtual private network], and just using it like that," said the Product Development Systems Manager. "All of our salespeople who are contracted are on it, and when we actually trained them and cut over to the new way of doing things, everyone was ecstatic. One of their biggest problems was they had to get to Lotus Notes and they had to VPN in. They were spending so much time on paperwork, but now it's much easier—they can get in whenever they want to."

While convenient for users, TrackVia does not leave important information at risk. In addition to protecting connections with SSL encryption, TrackVia can provide a clear audit trail to satisfy compliance concerns.

Ease of use

Many business users can be intimidated by the idea of building their own work management application. However, TrackVia enables non-technical teams to make highly custom applications for managing workflow and processes a breeze, and with no programming.

“When initially building our TrackVia workflow solution, I talked to customer support a lot, and they were so responsive. The TrackVia team would actually create stuff for me and show me how to do it. That’s the way I learned... It was really helpful to have all of them right there.”

Product Development Systems Manager
Outdoor Gear and Apparel Manufacturer

10

The number of minutes it took to build this manufacturer's very first workflow management application. Since then, the company has built nearly 20 applications to solve core business and PLM needs.

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In fact, building an application is the easiest part of the process.

“The hard part is eliciting the right requirements because [users] often don’t know what they want,” the manufacturer’s rep said. “The first application I built—it was simple—I think it took 10 minutes.”

One of the key issues with building a custom work management application is that there is no way to ensure adoption. If the end result fails to gain traction among employees, internal teams waste a lot of their time. Unfortunately, while end users may have a general idea of what they want, they are not always able to articulate those concepts into actionable feedback.

While there aren’t yet technical solutions that can help users clarify in more definite terms what they’re looking for, TrackVia makes custom workflow software development less time consuming. That allowed the manufacturer to spend more time identifying what functionality would benefit employees most. As a result, the brand has built close to 20 applications since implementing TrackVia, and all of these programs solved core business and product lifecycle management challenges.

Customer service

While it is difficult to measure prior to making an investment, customer support can greatly impact the effectiveness of any solution. For instance, when upgrades and enhanced features become available, it can be difficult to identify which ones will be most valuable.

According to this manufacturer, TrackVia had developed an in-depth understanding of their organization’s needs, which allowed TrackVia to provide superior service. Additionally, while service issues have been rare, TrackVia has contacted the manufacturer and addressed problems before end users even arrived to work.

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FORTUNE 500 APPAREL MANUFACTURER EMBRACES TRACKVIA COMPANY-WIDE



While product development relies heavily on TrackVia to manage its data, departments throughout the organization have also embraced it.

Human resources leverages TrackVia to manage new hire, termination and contractor data. Furthermore, the ease with which HR can create and distribute Web forms means that the department’s own processes have been significantly simplified.

“There are always people that don’t want to change anything ever, but the majority said, ‘this will be so great,’” the Product Development Systems Manager explained. “Plus, once I got those applications out there, people started calling me and wanting to create more. I think that’s really telling.”

The combination of improved productivity, ease of use and customer support has made TrackVia a valuable asset within the brand’s technology environment. Furthermore, whereas traditional solutions can undergo cumbersome update cycles, TrackVia benefits from efficient upgrades that do not result in business disruption.

This enables the company and its fellow corporate brands to continue expanding their user bases without putting critical data or employee productivity at risk.