



InterMetro, part of Emerson Electric Company, is the world's leading manufacturer of storage and transport products. InterMetro supplies its customers—which include major restaurant chains and hotels, hospitals and research centers, groundbreaking technological industries, and homes and garages—with new and imaginative solutions that put “space to work.”

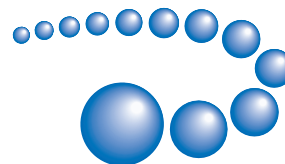
Summary:

Due to explosive growth in its Starsys™ product line, InterMetro's quotation department became an incredible bottleneck. With just three product specialists supporting 100 sales people and around 1,500 distributors, dealers, and specifiers worldwide, their goal to turnaround quotes within two to three days often didn't happen. Some days it took an hour, other days it took a week, but in extreme cases on large projects, quotations took up to 10 days.

InterMetro's management realized that there was a need to both automate and eliminate the bottlenecks in the drawing and quotation processes, while providing higher service levels. In May 2004, InterMetro implemented Configure One's *Concept*™ to radically streamline its quotation process.

Today, InterMetro has eliminated the bottleneck. Anyone can create a quote, drawings, room layout, and bill of material for 90 percent of all the possible configurations.

Three months after deploying *Concept*, InterMetro generated 60 percent more quotes, and realized a 21 percent increase in their highest monthly revenue. To date, *Concept* has directly supported over 50,000 Starsys configurations, with more than 1,700 registered users, representing more than 30 countries around the world. Millions of dollars in Starsys product sales have been configured using *Concept*, accounting for much of the 20 percent growth in product sales this year.



Configure One

Introduction

Louis Maslow founded the company in 1929, under the name Metropolitan Wire Goods Corporation. Under Maslow, the company was a prime example of entrepreneurship at its best and most successful. He developed the products, designed the machines to make them, and was personally involved in their marketing and sales. This personal touch, supported by Louis Maslow's strong commitment to quality, innovation, and service, put the company on its path to success.

In 1983, the company adopted the name InterMetro Industries Corporation to reflect its continued growth and penetration into new and expanding worldwide markets. In 1997, InterMetro became part of Emerson Electric, a Fortune 100 company with corporate headquarters in St. Louis, Missouri.

InterMetro continues to expand, and today the company has approximately 1,000 employees and three manufacturing facilities in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; Fostoria, Ohio; and Cuauhtémoc, Chih., Mexico. InterMetro operates distribution facilities in Wilkes-Barre, as well as Rancho Cucamonga, California; Mississauga, Ontario, Canada; and LaVergne, Tennessee. The company maintains sales offices in Europe and Singapore, as well as in the United States.

“Customers seem to really appreciate the hands on approach to the design process, and in my experience are more committed to buy when the design is perceived as their own.”

InterMetro's Starsys system is its fastest growing product line. Starsys is a highly modular, component-based storage and transport system offering limitless product solutions. The product line is “built to order” with each configuration potentially being a “one-off design.” In order to communicate the possible solutions and aid in the purchasing process, a product specialist in the quotation department had to create unique drawings in AutoCAD for each and every sales proposal.

Seventy percent of Starsys customers are in the U.S. healthcare market. The remaining 30 percent are evenly divided between U.S. commercial laboratories and international companies. With rapid growth in Starsys sales, satisfying the demand for product quotations and drawings became a major problem.



*Bradley Carlson, Manager,
Starsys Applications & Systems Development*

“The quotation department was an incredible bottleneck,” explained Bradley Carlson, manager, Starsys Applications & Systems Development. “Three product specialists were supporting 100 sales people, and around 1,500 dealers, distributors, and specifiers worldwide. We tried to turn-around quotes within two to three days, but that often didn't happen. Some days it took an hour, other days it took a week, but in extreme cases on large projects, quotations took up to 10 days.”

Need for a New System

InterMetro's management realized that there was a need to both automate and eliminate the bottlenecks in the drawing and quotation processes, while providing higher service levels. The company formed a team to evaluate available product configuration solutions, led by InterMetro's vice president of product development.

“The evaluation team was a good mix, with representatives from product development, marketing, sales, information technology, a couple of people from my department, and me,” said Carlson.

“One of the big advantages of Configure One was their pricing structure. A lot of the other vendors we evaluated licensed their products based on the number of users. Configure One has the option to license its software with unlimited users. As we currently have over 1,700 users, a user-based pricing model was not cost effective. Also, we didn't want to limit the potential number of customers using the configurator, nor worry about exceeding our limit.

“Another criterion was that we needed a web-based solution. We have many different types of users, including about 100 field sales people with laptops. It would be impossible to continually update and synchronize everyone. With a web-based solution, we just make a change on the server and it’s immediately available to everyone,” said Carlson.

Successful Implementation

After a successful implementation phase, InterMetro went live on *Concept* in May 2004.

“Configure One gave us tremendous customer support during and after the implementation,” said Carlson. “We started the implementation with the Starsys product line. We felt that would be an excellent place to start due to its complex nature and its rapid growth.

“Configure One gave us tremendous customer support during and after the implementation.”

“After extensive internal testing, we went live with around 100-125 users on day one. We then expanded and made *Concept* available to dealers and customers. We now have a wide variety of different types of users, both internally and externally. They could be anyone from a director of nursing looking to configure medical carts, to architects, equipment planners, laboratory planners, our overseas dealers, our sales force, or production looking at future demand. We promote our Starsys configurator URL in all our catalogs. If you don’t see what you want in the catalog, you can configure your own product.”

A New Way of Working

From the start, it was clear that a growing workload and the inefficiencies of the old system and procedures contributed to the existing bottleneck. Carlson explained the old process:

“We had a number of paper worksheets that were completed by our sales reps or dealers. They faxed these sheets to the internal quote department, where they were reviewed. If there were any questions or missing information, the quote group would contact the rep. When it was complete, it went into the queue. We would create the drawings in AutoCAD, and then create the

quotes. Experienced users in both the product and system tools entered each quote as an individual line item with comments. So, we were very limited as to who could create the quotes. Once all the drawings and quote were complete, they were scanned and emailed or faxed back to the customer. Then the revision process started and you were back to making changes.”

Now with *Concept* installed and available 24/7, not only is the quotation process faster, but also the outputs are more comprehensive and more accurate, according to Carlson. Users access *Concept* from any Internet connection with no special software required, just a web browser. The simple interface walks the user through a series of feature-based product queries allowing for thousands of available option combinations while validating user selections via *Concept’s* rules engine. “Once the configuration process is completed with real-time modeling, *Concept* automatically creates photo rendered images, 3D VRML models (view, spin, and zoom inside the web browser), CAD drawings, bills of material, and product quotations, all in a matter of minutes,” said Carlson.



The Sales Support team can either send the customer the configuration results electronically or post them to a private *Concept* Collaboration Site for review.

There the customer can supply feedback on the design, which is sent directly back to the creator of the Collaboration Site for any necessary modifications.

Carlson is enthusiastic about the changes *Concept* has made to his department:

“Today, we have eliminated the bottleneck, as inquiries don’t have to come to the internal quotation department. Anyone can create a quote, drawings, room layout, and bill of material for 90 percent of all the possible configurations. That is a wonderful thing for customers, sales reps, and dealers creating their own quotes. When a customer configures their own product and has ownership of the design, they tend to get the purchase order approved quicker.”

The Starsys sales team echoes this point. According to Gus Garcia, Healthcare Sales Team, “Using the configurator, I have been able to schedule design meetings for carts and storage units. Customers seem to really appreciate the hands on approach to the design process, and in my experience are more committed to buy when the design is perceived as their own.” *Concept* quickly became a big hit with InterMetro’s sales team as they soon discovered some of its competitive advantages.

“The biggest benefit is having 1,700 people creating quotes instead of three,”

“The configurator has been a huge help,” said Ken Payne, Healthcare Sales Team. “As far as the customer calls, I have found that the ability to have the end user ‘build’ their cart on the spot has been very powerful. The customer can experience first hand the flexibility of Starsys. In addition, the configurator gives us an advantage; after we leave a call, the customer has an image/drawing/quote of their exact cart, while the competition is leaving the customer with general brochures of how the cart might look.”

Benefits

Three months after deploying *Concept*, InterMetro saw their quote generation increase by 60 percent, and realized a 21 percent increase in their highest monthly revenue. To date, *Concept* has directly supported over 50,000 Starsys configurations, with more than 1,700 registered users, representing more than 30 countries around the world. Millions of dollars in Starsys product sales have been configured using *Concept*, accounting for much of the 20 percent growth in product sales this year.

“The biggest benefit is having 1,700 people creating quotes instead of three,” said Carlson. “*Concept* probably handles 85-90 percent of all requests. We now get orders where the sales person was not involved at all.

“It (*Concept*) has enabled someone who knows nothing about the product line to create a 99.9 percent accurate quote,”

By eliminating the bottleneck, the internal benefit is that our three product specialists can now focus on what they do best—supporting new applications, custom builds, and large projects.”

Another advantage of the configuration solution is the reduction in rework due to inaccurate specifications:

“While we will never completely eliminate all rework, and we still find some anomalies in the rules, the big advantage is that we now fix it one time in *Concept*, and we don’t have to educate people over and over again. It has enabled someone who knows nothing about the product line to create a 99.9 percent accurate quote,” said Carlson.

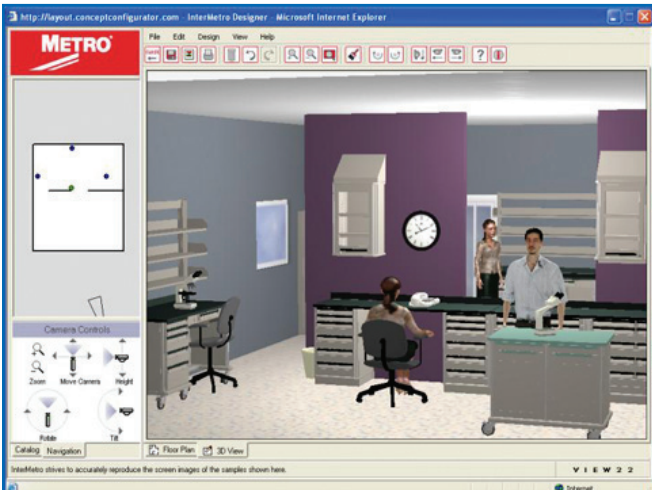
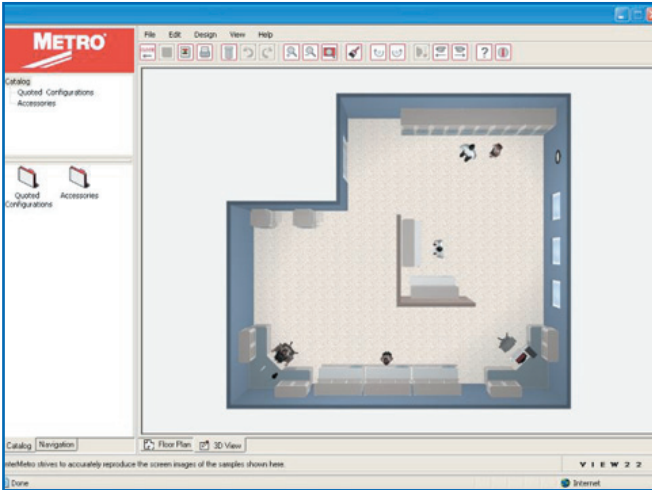
“The plan is to use *Concept* with all the configurable product lines,” said Carlson. “We recently loaded prices for 10,000 SKUs into *Concept*. Now we have the capability to combine both standard and configurable products in a single quote.”

Advanced Features

Configure One’s Room Layout module was an essential requirement for InterMetro, to allow users to visualize not only the configured products, but also how they may be positioned in the customer’s work area.

Once the desired product configurations have been generated for individual Starsys units, users have the option to pull the various configurations into the Room Layout module. This module allows the layout and customization of rooms, creating a scene to display InterMetro’s products within an applicable environment.

Users can drag and drop configurations into a virtual room in 2D and 3D. The room, or space, may be drawn from scratch, recalled from saved layout templates, or imported from existing files. Users customize the room by adding doors, windows, wall colors, and flooring.



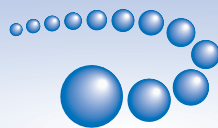
The configured space is viewable in 2D and 3D, enabling the user to adjust camera zooms, angles, and locations. Room views may then be printed, saved, exported, and/or incorporated into a *Concept*-generated document. InterMetro includes these room views within their quotes. Alternatively, users may “space plan” in 2D by choosing object templates from a catalog and positioning them within the room. Those “floor plan” drawings may then be recalled and enable the replacement of the 2D catalog objects with exact 3D configurations.

“Since we've added the Room Layout module to our configurator implementation, our sales team no longer has to rely on, or wait for our inside support team to create rendered AutoCAD images for client presentations,” said Carlson. “Using the Room Layout module, our sales team now creates lifelike, photo-rendered images of our configured products placed within the client's space—all in a matter of minutes with no special CAD training or CAD software. The ability to visualize the product in advance, as it will be installed, helps cut down on costly revisions at the time of installation. The Room Layout module has been a wonderful addition to our web-based configurator.”

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