



## **KNAPHEIDE Truck Equipment Upgrades to Galaxy APS—Posts ROI in Six Months**

When a city needs a snowplow or a contractor needs a dump truck—where do they shop? Knapheide Truck Equipment Company of Flint, Michigan (Knapheide Flint). The venerable manufacturer transforms truck chassis from Dodge Ford and GM into the hard-working trucks that move the nation.

Five thousand trucks roll off the line at Knapheide Flint each year. Service truck bodies, dump bodies, snow plows, platforms, premium dry freight vans, lift gates, van interiors, and crane bodies. Up to twenty jobs run concurrently at any time in the production scheduling department.

When Dick Marx joined Knapheide Flint as Materials Manager, he was surprised to find that the company still relied on an enormous magnetic board to schedule jobs. In his mind, manufacturers wouldn't expect their engineers to design with a pencil or ruler; why make planners/schedulers use a white board or spreadsheet?

The manual scheduling process was labor intensive, requiring two full-time workers. Worse yet, that board loomed over production as the singular bottleneck on the company's manufacturing line. "Our scheduling system was limiting our production capabilities," says Marx, "It had become the determinant of growth potential, not capacity."



Every day staff scanned hundreds of board jobs, valiantly trying to make adjustments and predictions. "Customers want to know when their truck will be ready, and we weren't able to give them a very accurate answer," recalls Marx. Marx came from a computer background and knew Knapheide's process could be automated. He set out to find a solution.

An Internet search led Marx to PlanetTogether, a Microsoft .NET based, multi-plant, real-time Advanced Planning & Scheduling (APS) software developer for manufacturers. "The fact that their Galaxy product was .NET-based was important. It meant we could easily integrate with our manufacturing software," Marx notes. "I saw a demonstration, spoke with consultants, and was convinced Galaxy was the solution for us."

### **Quick Integration**

Knapheide and PlanetTogether began to exchange data. Using Flint's ERP software, Planet consultants designed the import utilities to accept job data and available inventory, and the export utility to send Galaxy's calculations back to Knapheide's ERP system in the form of job completion dates.

The familiar drag-and-drop interface of Galaxy made the scheduling tool simple to use. Staff now has immediate visual feedback as any late jobs appear in red. Galaxy even optimizes the schedule to meet promised delivery dates. "We feed it the facts we know, and it automatically proposes an optimized schedule that allows us to meet those dates. It's something we tried, but never could do manually," notes Marx. Galaxy's scheduling screen displays on a large monitor in the foreman's office. Now the sales representatives can access to the schedule when communicating with customers.

## Things Change

No longer stuck in manual mode, Knapheide Flint now provides its customers with realistic estimates of project completion dates because it can quickly identify bottlenecks and work out a plan, right down to paint or equipment installs. “We can see if our paint department will be swamped next Tuesday, and bring in more staff to meet the need,” explains Marx.

The skill level and capabilities of each staff member are considered during scheduling to ensure the right individual is assigned to the right task. “Our quality has improved as a result,” says Marx, “the software assigns the best person to the job.”

“What-if” analyses were also impossible with the old manual system. Now, Marx is able to see the impact of adding a second shift, or hiring an additional person. “We’re able to make strategic decisions that improve our operations,” he says. “We can proactively prepare for anticipated increases or slowdowns in demand.”

***“Scheduling now takes about 15 minutes,” Marx beams. “PlanetTogether paid for itself in six months!”***

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## About PlanetTogether

PlanetTogether is known for stellar performance in production scheduling for multi-plant manufacturers. Founded in 2004 by Cornell University engineers, this San Diego-based software developer thrives on the challenge of algorithms to drive manufacturing efficiency. Planet’s showcase product is the **Galaxy APS production scheduling platform**, whose muscular functionality cuts inventory and labor costs in half, boosts productivity by double digits, and connects multi-plant operations with precision. Fully customizable, *Galaxy* integrates to virtually all ERP systems, typically in four months, and pays for itself in six.