

## High-Tech Product Data Management Transformation

### The Challenge:

A leading technology company engaged Spinnaker to tackle a product data challenge that touched multiple systems and all major business functions. The client serves several industries requiring a variety of different product performance and compliance characteristics and tailoring of products to customer specifications is commonplace. Faced with rapid product evolution and item proliferation, the client needed to reassess its processes and data strategy so product lifecycle and data management could keep pace.

Overly restrictive and bureaucratic processes for product introduction no longer served the needs of customers or the business. At the same time, the underlying product data model failed to support the internal and external variations needed for different customer needs and product changes over time. The consequences of these limitations were widespread noncompliance with process and data standards and high levels of manual, off-system activity – including manual workarounds of an estimated one in seven orders, slowing business processes and diverting important resources.

### The Solution:

Spinnaker planned and conducted workshops globally with a broad set of stakeholders. These exposed pain points revealed how little this cross-functional group collaborated. Two must-change items emerged that formed the basis of solution definition:

1. A different data relationship between internal and external part structures, one that could vary by customer context, was essential.
2. Standard processes needed to change to fix the conflict between responsiveness and compliance.

In pursuit of these principles, Spinnaker proposed using standard functionality in the client's ERP system to allow customers to order product using standard naming while maintaining internal details of customer-specific variations. By decoupling internal product identifiers from the external product name scheme, the client was freed of a structural constraint that prevented integration of key processes. To provide the needed business flexibility for product still in development, Spinnaker defined parallel product lifecycle states

that allowed key transaction support while maintaining transparency of the underlying product lifecycle status.

Spinnaker also guided a large client team through understanding and approving the technical and procedural elements of the redesign. Spinnaker wrote functional specifications, use case definitions, standard procedures, and test requirements. This detailed, often tedious, work was essential to successful technical implementation as well as to organizational acceptance. Implementation was fast-tracked and carefully managed to avoid conflicts with other impending system changes. From blueprint to technical adoption took less than six months.

## The Results:


The client is launching new, generalized system capabilities. It is already beginning to leverage the flexibility in product definition to better expose early lifecycle product variants to its forecasting and supply planning processes. The new business processes and Product Data Management solution are flexible and decouple as-sold and as-built product data structures to let the client eliminate a large array of exception conditions and manual workarounds, and standardize on reusable scenarios applying to several classes of business requirements.

The processes that manage lifecycle progress for new products are much more disciplined and now operate in concert with business needs for early-stage business dealings with key customers. The architectural nature of the solution implemented provides flexibility well beyond the in-scope use cases. As such it affords the client the chance to return to a disciplined, compliant set of processes without conceding business agility or velocity.

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About Spinnaker: Spinnaker is a supply chain services company that helps clients grow, manage risk, reduce costs, and improve customer service by developing world-class supply chain capabilities. Our services help clients develop the right supply chain strategy for their business challenges and implement the process and technology solutions to improve Demand/Supply Planning, Procurement and Sourcing, Logistics and Warehousing, and Reverse Logistics business performance. Spinnaker offers a unique service delivery model that combines the strength of deeply experienced management and technology consultants with a seasoned team of business process outsourcing (BPO) and 3rd-party logistics (3PL) professionals. Founded in 2002, Spinnaker has offices in Boston, Columbus, Denver, Houston, Memphis, Pittsburgh, London, and Singapore.

### Contact Us:

 [Phone: 877-476-0576](tel:877-476-0576)

 [Email: info@spinnakermgmt.com](mailto:info@spinnakermgmt.com)