

Browser Based terminals help YKK Architectural Products add functionality to it's Manufacturing Information System, while maintaining simplicity



Founded more than a quarter century ago, the Architectural Products business of YKK is today a world leader in the manufacture of aluminum building products. Its company philosophy of continual investment in research and development, in testing, and in production facilities has kept it in the forefront of the industry worldwide. YKK AP produces architectural products of the highest quality and at the lowest possible cost.

To this end, YKK AP has built one of the newest and most technologically advanced manufacturing facilities in the United States in Dublin, Georgia. There, all manufacturing is vertically integrated to ensure control of quality, delivery, and cost.

Through total vertical integration of manufacturing, YKK AP controls every step of the production process in-house -- from casting the aluminum billets, to extrusion, finishing, and fabrication -- to ensure both the quality and the timely delivery of its products.

Aiding its success in manufacturing is an iSeries AS/400 based manufacturing information system. Like many other AS/400 users, YKK has been migrating their infrastructure from traditional twinax to Ethernet and TCP/IP. On the shop floor however, the simplicity and durability of traditional "dumb" terminals, as well as their ability to attach bar code scanners and printers had kept YKK AP from moving to PC's.



Of late, YKK has made many of its product drawings electronically accessible over its corporate intranet. As a result, the need to access and print these drawings on demand had meant that Ethernet attached PC's needed to be introduced on the shop floor. This created a trade off between the need for access to the intranet drawing database and the additional support burden that PC's on the shop floor would impose on its IT staff.

Recently however, IMCORP introduced YKK AP to a new class of device, the 3804 Browser Based terminal from Affirmative Computer Systems. With no moving parts, Ethernet connectivity and resident TN5250e emulation, the 3804 represented all the best features of YKK's workhorse twinax terminals. And, with a version of Internet Explorer 4.0 also on board, it meant that the 3804 could also fill the need to access and print drawings. In addition, because the Affirmative unit can support up to three attached printers, YKK has been able to avoid the expense of a separate print server at those stations that require two printers.

"Thanks to the Affirmative device, we can provide our manufacturing organization with the additional function it needs without sacrificing the reliability they've come to expect, or unduly increasing our support burden." says Ms. Sheila Clark of YKK AP's IT staff

In addition, should the need arise for additional networking functionality on the shop floor, the 3804 is ready. Its on board RDP and ICA clients enable network applications to be delivered from a centrally located Windows 2000™ or Citrix Metaframe™ Server