

Case study: YouTrack adopted by Foldcraft furniture manufacturer



We've had a little Q&A session with Greg Witkamp of Foldcraft, a US furniture manufacturing company that has recently adopted YouTrack. Enjoy!



Foldcraft

Foldcraft is an employee-owned manufacturer of restaurant furniture. The company employs about 300 people in Minnesota, Washington, and California. Some of their biggest customers include Subway, International Dairy Queen, Buffalo Wild Wings, and Domino's Pizza. Foldcraft has been practicing Lean Manufacturing since the 90s.

What do you do from a business perspective? What products are you offering?

We produce hard and soft seating (benches and upholstered booths), a variety of table tops and counters, wood and metal chairs, and millwork.

Could you please briefly describe your development/business process?

The short version is: Sales gets an order and that order is entered into our ERP system. Jobs are created, scheduled and built. Finished product is shipped to our customers.

What obstacles or opportunities do you typically encounter?

As a Process Engineer, the problem I encounter the most is lack of visibility of a process.

What is your issue/task tracking experience prior to using YouTrack?

Issue/task tracking before YouTrack involved a sea of emails and spreadsheets. I did attempt using some task management programs, but they lacked the power that YouTrack has.

What products did you consider?

I tried out Nozbe, it lacked the functionality we needed. I think I looked at Jama, but I don't think they had a free version like the offer that Youtrack has.

How did you go about evaluating YouTrack?

I played around with YouTrack for about a year before the company did a full-on trial. It took a while to understand how YouTrack worked as an issue tracker and how it could be used to help manage our processes. When we did get to do a full-blown evaluation, we were in the process of merging two plants and everything was pretty chaotic. We were having daily meetings with about a dozen people involved to try to understand where all of our engineered orders were. When the meeting was over, it still wasn't clear where everything was.

The day I sat in on that meeting I recommended we try using YouTrack to provide the much needed visibility to the process. It was pretty clear after a couple weeks that we would've been drowning in chaos if we didn't use YouTrack. We've been using YouTrack to manage that process for the past 2 years.

Why did you choose YouTrack?

1. Ease of use – Most of our employees are not power users when it comes to computers, and what I was looking for at the time was the least painful way for manufacturing to provide feedback to engineering of things they needed to fix. It's pretty easy to click a big orange button and fill out a few fields, and drop on a few attachments if needed.
2. Visibility of what needs done – this is critical, especially when dealing with a group of about 5 or more people.
3. Notifications of changes – automatically keeping everyone in the loop who wants to be really helps maintain good communication.
4. Change History – This really helps improve accountability and eliminate finger pointing.
5. Saved searches – These are great for providing individuals the information they need to know.
6. Cost – incredible value for the price.

What was your experience with YouTrack like?

It was a little rocky to start. For non-software people, it takes a while to get them to understand why they should use it. They don't see it being any different than sending an email, since they'll get an email notification anyway. They don't see it being any better than using a spreadsheet to log all the tasks and issues that need to be done. But once people start using it and start to understand the benefits, it soon becomes a necessity to do their daily job.

What are some of your results of using YouTrack? Any next steps?

It's very easy to see the status of all the tickets in a project and see what needs done next. One of the things I realized as I searched for a solution is that I was spending more time looking for information for what I needed to do next, instead of actually fixing an issue or doing a task. YouTrack helps provide that visibility to a process so you spend less time *looking for* what needs done and more time *doing* what needs done. We use YouTrack to fill many of the gaps that our ERP system can't.

We use YouTrack to manage the following processes:

- Reporting manufacturing issues to Engineering
- Engineering tasks come from Sales
- Tracking incoming "Customer Owned Materials"
- Smaller project tasks
- Quotes
- Orders
- Individual tasks
- Requests for Purchasing to source or quote a product or material
- Maintenance tickets

Do you have any recommendations, tips or advice for other companies that are considering YouTrack for their issue tracking solution?

- Start small with a simple process that several people need to know about, and begin understanding how it works. If you aren't sure if you need a custom field, then don't add it until you've tried out the project for a little bit.
- For non-software people, take some time to understand what Agile board is and how you will use the different custom field types.
- Using a crisis is a great way of getting everyone on board quickly.
- YouTrack is the easiest platform I've used so far for creating new projects to manage a process. Take some time on the front end to really understand what you want to track.
- The workflow editor is a little difficult to use if you're not familiar with some basic programming, but it can add a whole new layer of functionality and automation.
- If you're having trouble getting everyone on the same page, YouTrack is a great tool to help with that.
- If you don't have a strong IT department, let JetBrains host it in the cloud.
- The vast majority of the info put into YouTrack can be easily exported to CSV. However, many of the date/time fields are not in the same format that is used in Excel and require some cleaning of the data to get the standard Excel date formats to work.

Now that is a great example of how YouTrack can help a non-software company streamline their work processes!

We thank Foldcraft and especially Greg Witkamp for sharing their success story with us, and wish them all the best in the future.