

# Cinram fuses IBM i and Windows with LANSA



Cinram Logistics UK, a division of the world's largest manufacturer and distributor of pre-recorded entertainment media, holds exclusive agreements with major movie studios, software and music publishers, including Warner Home Video, 20th Century Fox, MGM and EMI. Cinram uses RAMP from LANSA to gradually redevelop and modernize its Global Distribution System. The new composite application offers the underlying strength of the existing core system, in combination with intuitive graphical front-end applications and tight Microsoft Office integration.

**Tony Collins**, European Systems Development Manager at Cinram, says, "Functionally, our core distribution system successfully supports our business. Being able to bond with LANSA means we don't have to throw away the work we have done over the past 10 years. LANSA provides a very neat and cost-effective solution, allowing us to build further on the system we already had in place. It gives us a platform to take forward."

## Functionally Rich

Cinram International Inc. operates 23 major facilities that span nearly 13 million square feet. Worldwide Cinram has the capacity to manufacture 2.1 billion DVDs and 800 million CDs per year. Cinram Logistics UK (Cinram) has a 14 acre site in Aylesbury, from where it manages the order processing, warehousing, shipping, invoicing and returns processing for its clients.

Cinram uses an IBM i and a bespoke Global Distribution System (GDS) to support its operations in the UK, Germany, France and Benelux. The system supports 300 users and manages order fulfilment for multiple film and music studios to over 5,000 retailers

and wholesalers across Europe. Originally developed in the late nineties, the GDS sits on top of a JD Edwards ERP structure and has been customized to suit the specific business needs over many years.

"Although the system is functionally rich and robust, some users could not see past the limitations of the original green-screen interface," says Collins. The legacy look became a major source of dissatisfaction, especially for those clients that had previously worked in a SAP environment.

But clients were not the only drivers for modernization, explains Collins. "It is also about us moving forward by creating a modern and intuitive user interface."

Previously Collins had tried screen-scraping the GDS, but he was disappointed in the results. "We looked at a lot of GUI products and they did make the system look modern, but you still got a very clear sense that there was an AS/400 legacy system underneath," he explains.

"We were looking for a solution that felt like a real Windows environment and the LANSA RAMP solution fitted well. RAMP also gave us tight integration with MS Office and Windows in general, another big plus."

**"RAMP provides a very neat and cost-effective solution."**

## Five to One Consolidation

After an extensive feasibility study, Cinram proceeded with LANSA.

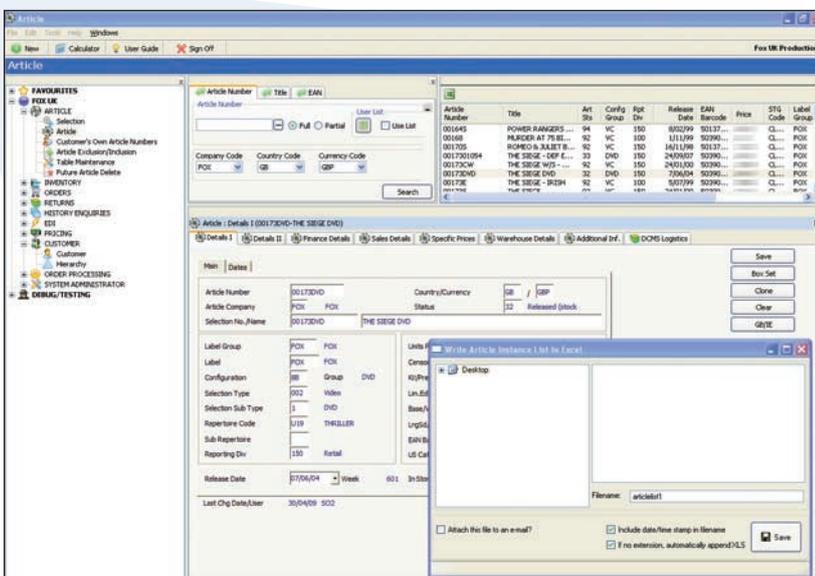
Clients were invited to join in the requirements specification and design stage of the project and Collins and his team went through a series of very detailed joint design sessions. "As a result of the formal and elaborate design approach, the project took longer than we'd anticipated, but we did get excellent results," says Collins.

"We spent quite some time brainstorming about how we could make the user interface more efficient. Tasks that previously required starting up five or six different programs, could often be consolidated to a single LANSA function."

Cinram started with the master file maintenance programs and then moved on to the order management, pricing, returns and EDI modules.

RAMP generates a framework with automated filters and tabs. Behind the tabs you can plug in a selection of screen translations, LANSA (re)developed applications and other new functionality. Many companies new to Windows development dip their toes carefully in the water and start with screen translations. But Cinram took the Windows development plunge right away and, using the 80/20 rule, redeveloped at least 20 percent of their programs.

"We really challenged ourselves and made a conscious decision that we didn't want to do a project and then find ourselves redeveloping it after six months," explains Collins. →



Users can extract any instance list of data from Cinram's distribution system to Microsoft Excel and they can populate a RAMP filter in the distribution system with data from Excel.

"There's a lot of power with the LANSA customization, which we came to utilize more as we progressed through the project. As a result, the later modules were more sophisticated than the earlier ones. Our Returns Module is completely unrecognizable from its green-screen counterpart."

"The ratio of program consolidation (old to new) is nearly five to one, maybe even higher for the more recently RAMP-ed modules," estimates Collins. "You can do so much within one LANSA business object, it was hard to grasp at first. We are really pleased with it."

Collins noticed, that although users are more productive, their first impression can be that the system is slower. "When you're working on a green-screen, your fingers are always busy and you're always thinking about which screen you're going to go to next. Whereas now, users just click on a single button and wait for the system to do the navigation for them."

The new system caters for tight integration with MS Office. For example, users can extract any instance list of data from the GDS to Excel and they can populate a RAMP filter in the GDS with data from Excel.

Collins used some consultancy in the early stages of the project, but for the most part he managed to do the project with his own team, the same developers who also maintain the RPG and JD Edward systems. The upside of this was that the developers had deep knowledge of the underlying GDS system, but it also slowed down the project because developers had to divide their time between new development and maintenance, as day-to-day business didn't stop for Cinram.

### Keep the Competitive Advantage

While Collins was aiming to give the GDS a Windows-style look-and-feel, he always felt that building further on the core system, rather than replacing it completely, was the correct approach.

"Changing to another ERP often means you have to change your business processes. We're happy with the way we work and we're happy with the functionality the core system offers. It is extremely customized for our business and a major contributing factor to our competitive advantage. Being able to bond with LANSA means we don't have to throw away the good work we have done over the past 10 years."



The Cinram IT team, from left to right: Richard Walker, Adelaida Echeverri, Mark Wadsworth, Tony Collins, Marcus Woods, Phillip Grant.

### "RAMP offers a real Windows environment and tight integration with MS Office."

"LANSA RAMP provides a very neat and cost-effective solution allowing us to build further on the system we already had in place and improve on it with better navigation, a productive Windows user interface, new functionality and MS Office integration," continues Collins.

Cinram's users now have the ability to move data from Excel into the LANSA application and vice versa. For example, they can use an Excel spreadsheet with a subset of product codes as a filter in RAMP to return detailed information about those products into an instance list. They can then extract the instance list with detailed information back into another spreadsheet.

"This tight integration with Excel is available throughout the system," explains Collins. "It provides for a smooth workflow between all areas of business and saves a lot of time."

"The majority of the users that we're aiming this product at are already Windows users. The big advantage we achieved modernizing the system with LANSA, is that going forward the system will be far more intuitive. Specifically

for people that are coming new into the business, the learning curve will be much shorter," continues Collins.

### A Platform to Take Forward

"Users have responded very positively," explains Collins. "They have been a fundamental part of design, so they feel they own the system."

Collins is planning to redevelop the user interfacing programs for all GDS modules and aims to run the next few projects in exactly the same way. Key groups of users have already been identified.

The system will be rolled out to Germany and the Benelux as well, with some customization to allow for territory specific functionality. For the time being the system is going to be rolled out in English, although Collins may make use of LANSA's multi-lingual features in the future.

"The real advantage is having a system that the users appreciate. We've only started scratching the surface with LANSA, as we still have an awful lot of RPG programs to maintain. The great thing about LANSA and RAMP, is that it gives us a platform to take forward," concludes Collins. ■

### COMPANY AND SYSTEM INFORMATION

- Cinram International Inc. is the world's largest provider of pre-recorded multimedia products and related logistics services. With facilities in North America and Europe, Cinram manufactures and distributes pre-recorded DVDs, audio CDs, and CD-ROMs for motion picture studios, music labels, publishers and computer software companies around the world. Cinram also provides distribution and logistics services to the telecommunications industry in North America and Europe through its wireless subsidiaries. Cinram operates 23 major facilities that span nearly 13 million square feet and employs approximately 17,000 people worldwide. For more information visit: [www.cinram.com](http://www.cinram.com)