

## Productivity boost with EPLAN implementation

### Using EPLAN for design standardization

The ATS Groep is a multidisciplinary technology business with divisions across Belgium. Its core activities are rooted in electrical and mechanical engineering, but ATS also focuses on industrial machinery and automation, cooling technology, full project management and more. Peter Deschepper, electrical engineering department manager for the last seven of his 11 years with ATS, has been using different versions of EPLAN for 17 years and has used it to push through design standardization that has allowed ATS to handle more projects with more engineers but fewer licenses, and turn around projects faster. "This is a deliberate strategy," says Deschepper, adding: "Over the past few years, we have mainly invested in further optimizing our engineering department. This included pushing through standardization and optimization with EPLAN."

ATS Groep's experience shows that by using EPLAN's productivity enhancing capabilities to the fullest, a company can grow significantly without having to spend proportionately more on its electrical design platform. ATS bought its last EPLAN licence in 2000 when it had 290 employees and has grown since to a staff of 510, most of whom are highly specialized engineers and technicians.

# Leveraging existing licenses to **GROW**

“I was always a fan of the many benefits EPLAN brings,” says Peter Deschepper. “That is why I kept embedding EPLAN further into our organization.”



## **EPLAN user for nearly 20 years**

The company has been an EPLAN user since 1989. Since buying its 13<sup>th</sup> and last license in 2000, ATS has focused on optimizing the existing licenses, and now actually needs fewer to handle more projects.

The move to greater standardization started in 2001 with EPLAN 5. “Our database contained over 12,000 different items. We worked on developing two sample projects to serve as ‘blueprints’ for 70% of all customer orders: a Main Low Voltage Panel (MLVP) project and an automation project. The automation template automatically took account of machinery directives, emergency stop circuits, controls and PLCs to name a few. It’s an ideal starting point for any project.”

## **EPLAN Electric P8 offered additional possibilities**

The migration of electrical design to the new EPLAN Electric P8 followed in 2006. Deschepper saw even more opportunities with this leading edge design package to increase the output of his engineers. “We were able to integrate all work done in the older EPLAN 21 and EPLAN 5 into the new platform so that we can anticipate all of our existing customers’ wishes. Thanks to EPLAN Electric P8, all of our stored intelligence is linked to our database: from project templates, symbols, macros, electrical cabinet macros and technical properties to descriptions in various languages. We also migrated our two sample projects to EPLAN Electric P8 and updated them to reflect its new capabilities.” Migrating to EPLAN Electric P8 when it was brand new also exemplifies how ATS makes it a point to be an early adopter of new technology to stay ahead of its competition.

## **Much shorter time to market**

Standardizing project elements and storing them in the new EPLAN database has accelerated project workflows. “Our workshop can get started more quickly and turn around a project in less time. The purchasing department, which is linked to

# MIGRATION

to

**EPLAN Electric P8**

the database, always has a real-time status of component inventory levels and project hardware requirements. This in turn leads to our quotes being extremely precise, which is not something to take for granted considering that we use 1,300 different types of cable," adds Deschepper.

## Engineers work interchangeably

Peter Deschepper has leveraged another strength of the database-driven EPLAN Electric P8. His team can work interchangeably on any job. "Our design group is comprised of 11 engineers, every one of whom must be able to work on any project at any time. Projects become user-independent without suffering any loss of quality. It is easier for us to absorb peaks in the workload, and projects aren't delayed by an engineer's absence. That's had a positive impact on our productivity and profitability!"

## Secrets to smooth implementation

The transition from EPLAN 5 to EPLAN Electric P8 went exceedingly smoothly, thanks in large part to EPLAN's support, training and help desk. During the migration, ATS staff received training in groups of twos and threes. EPLAN provided the training and other necessary support. The last engineer moved over to the new system at the end of June 2008. Since then, all work is done on EPLAN Electric P8.

## Applying enclosure designs without added interface

Peter Deschepper sees opportunities to implement even greater automation using the EPLAN Platform, like adding EPLAN Cabinet, a specialized software package for designing enclosures. "We want to further expand the opportunities to load drill and milling templates into the Perforex CNC machine and the label-engraving machine. EPLAN Cabinet now allows the designs to be directly applied to the manufacturing machines without us having to write an interface. That's a direction I certainly want to pursue."

“There is always a path of growth at EPLAN,” says Peter Deschepper. “The EPLAN staff consistently listens to our suggestions and has often incorporated them into new releases. That’s why I have high expectations for the innovations EPLAN has in store for us.”



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Focus on design productivity  
helps sustain growth

# SUMMARY

ATS Groep, one of Belgium's leading technology product and service providers, has grown progressively with EPLAN design software. By using EPLAN to standardize and optimize design, the company has been able to greatly expand its electrical engineering workload without buying additional software licenses. Projects are turned around more quickly and the purchasing department can better monitor the component inventory levels as reflected in the EPLAN database. This has translated into increased productivity, profitability, business efficiency and customer satisfaction made possible by extracting the maximum benefits from EPLAN's industry-leading design platform and its flagship product, EPLAN Electric P8.

Find out more about ATS Groep on [www.atsgroep.be](http://www.atsgroep.be)

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