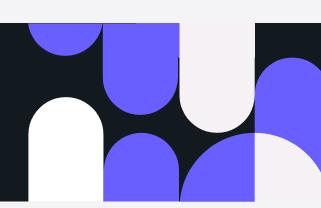# Yaskawa: Getting to Grips with their Sales Process

Yaskawa is the world's leading supplier of robotic solutions for production lines. With Yaskawa's reputation built on technical accuracy, the company needed to eliminate errors and risk from the quotation process. They found the solution with Tacton. Their sales teams are now producing accurate, high-quality quotations in a fraction of the time it previously took.

> "I know many companies hesitate to introduce a configurator because they think – our products cannot be streamlined. There were people in our company who said it wouldn't be possible, but it was. It was the right step and the right decision to select Tacton." Dr. Michael Klos, Yaskawa

A Sub-par Quoting Process

Yaskawa is a world leader in process automation (think robots), which manufactures up to 25,000 industrial robots per year. To meet the growing demand, the company realized its sale quoting process wouldn't be able to cope.

When quoting for new business, the sales team relied on Excel to capture a list of customer requirements. This Excel file was handed over to an inside sales group who manually created a quotation based on the list.

Yaskawa product portfolio includes over 120 different robot models, all with configurable options and add-ons. Factor in a long and complex price list with customer-specific discounts and the situation gets complicated quickly.

For each deal, the team would waste time chasing information internally, sometimes even needing to involve the Japanese organization to get clarification on product availability, lead times, and compatibility. This, of course, led to delays.

Dr. Michael Klos, General Manager of Yaskawa Europe Robotics Division, explains, "Selecting the wrong component or not having a configuration dependency properly clarified could easily create a mess. One missing component could hold up the entire process." A quotation would typically take eight days to prepare, sometimes up to two weeks for the more complicated and unusual configurations.

Dr. Klos continues, "Our quotations looked more like a spare parts list – they were very product-focused and cryptic and said very little about the benefits of the product and its functionality – which is, of course, the part that is of interest to the customer. Sometimes we'd even need to explain a quotation after we sent it out, delaying the buying process further."

Choosing the right Configurator

The leadership at Yaskawa realized they needed a better way to prepare sales quotes.

"We need to be sure that everything that we sell is 100% technically correct. Our reputation is built on that. Our goal was to reduce the quotation lead times and to eliminate the risk resulting from our quotation process."
Yaskawa decided to look for a sales configuration solution and evaluated three commercial tools. They also challenged whether they needed a commercial tool at all, and looked both at improving their existing Excel calculation and at working with their ERP vendor, SAP.

"It was very important for us to use a standard software tool as we wanted to avoid going too deep into customization work. Of course, the quality of quotation documents was also a major factor, as was the ease of maintenance – we wanted to have a system that could be used and updated by people who are not IT engineers."
Integration with Yaskawa's ERP system was another important factor – the company wanted BOMs to be generated automatically and transferred to the ERP

system once a quotation turned into an order. The solution also needed to have multi-language support and integrated price list management.

"The first thing that spoke for Tacton was the easy and powerful way the logic is represented within the configuration tool. The second factor was that it can be easily maintained by people in our company. Because the configuration logic is separate from the product data, we found that the modeler just defines the model and the relationships. After that, all the parts, products, prices and lead times can be fed into those models and updated very easily."

Setting the project in motion

Yaskawa's aim was to create certainty and eliminate all the time wasted chasing information internally. The team set a goal of having a proposal quote ready for the customer by the end of each sales meeting. This was unthinkable to many at Yaskawa.

"We preferred a pragmatic approach, increasing the functionality and level of IT-integration in defined steps." Dr. Klos explains, "Our plan was to start with the configuration project and then integrate with our ERP and CRM systems - SAP and Salesforce." The company began by putting standard products into the configurator and then added components and options over time.

Taking ownership of the modeling tool

"Of course this isn't the usual scenario and we were far from a typical customer in this respect. But Tacton supported us in our approach. We got some basic modeling training and attended some workshops, with Tacton's guidance and advice we were able to do the modeling on our own – which speaks for how easy the software is to use."

Yaskawa modeled most of its standard product line within a year. "We never came to a point where we stalled or where the software had limitations that were a showstopper for us. We were always able to implement all our ideas within the solution" says Dr. Klos.

Presenting a Quote with Confidence

Everything went according to plan. Yaskawa has achieved its goals and is now proceeding to the next steps. With product knowledge captured within the system, the sales teams are now generating high-quality quotes with pricing – without any help from the inside sales team. The one-day target was easily reached.

Dr. Klos says, "We have generated more than 1,400 sales quotes to date. But the biggest success is the fact that we are able to react so quickly and get quotes to our customers immediately. Some of our sales teams are impressing customers by doing configurations together with the customer and leaving a complete proposal at the end of their visit." The quality of Yaskawa's quotation documents has improved dramatically. Here, Dr. Klos feels they have reached state-of-the-art status.

"We can include additional promotional documents in our branded quote, and everything is gathered automatically by the configurator. I feel that our salespeople are now proud and confident whenever they send a quote. The feedback from our customer base is very good and we are much more professional in the eyes of our customers.