

## GRUAU

### Converts its Information System

*Leading European commercial vehicle body builder GRUAU transforms its technical information system in order to reduce project development times and facilitate exchanges between sites.*



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**David Boscher**  
Group CAD/CAM Manager

**GRUAU** is a manufacturer-body builder (its original business) that designs, manufactures, markets and distributes its own products through eight brands\*, as well as a manufacturer-OEM producing series (commercial and private vehicles) for major automotive manufacturers. In addition to its head office in Laval, GRUAU has 9 medium-batch production sites in France and two abroad. With revenues of €95m in 2002 and 800 employees, this hundred-year-old family company has moved from “small-scale to industrial production”, explains David Boscher, CAD/CAM Manager for the Group. “It has grown considerably over the last 5 years, prompting it to develop its CAD/CAM tools and rethink its organization.”

#### **A DARING GAMBLE**

Formerly equipped with EUCLID in its design office and TOPSOLID in the planning department, and faced with an increasing number of technical documents, GRUAU’s “flat” organization started to become saturated. “There was an underlying need to homogenize the design office and planning department development cycle,” adds David Boscher. “This situation was confirmed by the results of the audit carried out by MDTVISION, which highlighted the mix of software and the lack of centralized information.”



In 2002, GRUAU’s general management took a real gamble in accepting the submitted development project. Investment was heavy for a company of its size: about 0.5% of revenues at the time. To spread out the costs and avoid having too strong an impact on the company’s operation at a time when its industrial activity was very strong, the project was spread out over 3 years.

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### **3-YEAR DEVELOPMENT**

The first year was dedicated to testing solutions. “MDTVISION’s bodywork, finished element calculation and retro-design experts helped us to test CATIA’s functions,” explains David Boscher. GRUAU chose CATIA V5 and SmarTeam for product data management. The choice of V5 was daring at the time as it was ahead of all other European manufacturers. Furthermore, it enabled the company to move to a new software solution in one go.

The solution was deployed to the design office and planning department in the second year. 2003 also saw the appearance of Microbus, an urban vehicle that is innovative in its size but also as it was the first project wholly developed by GRUAU (and by a European automotive manufacturer) on CATIA V5 and SmarTeam. The project showed that it was essential to integrate product data management with design from the outset, in order to compile a database that is shared by everyone concerned. This provides increased efficiency and easier document management.

The aim this year, the project’s final year, is to roll out the solution throughout the whole group. “We hope to open up GRUAU Laval’s database up to all our production sites, which need to consult plans and digitizations.” This action will eventually include other departments such as purchasing, quality and sales.



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### **BENEFITS OF A GENERAL SYSTEM**

Moving from a single-level CAD to a global PLM solution for all entities in the company has allowed GRUAU to do away with exchanging CDs and paper documents, and thus enhance quality: “the world of design is always changing and a document can be modified 2 or 3 times a week. If you are not aware of the latest modifications, mistakes can be made. This is why a wide-ranging PDM system is needed in our factories,” says David Boscher. “Furthermore, by providing access to documents in the design phase, industrialization can be prepared well upstream, thus reducing the product development cycle.”

### **PROMISING FIRST RESULTS**

At the current stage of its transformation project, GRUAU considers it has succeeded without too many disruptions. This was possible thanks to the help of MDTVISION consultants, whose expertise was much appreciated, and the creation of an internal resource, which helped users on a daily basis.

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perfectly proportioned and tailored to GRUAU. It is still too soon for us to calculate ROI, but some things are certain: we have saved 2/3 of programming time on panel machines, and that's just the tip of the iceberg!" says David Boscher.

\* GRUAU, ISBERG, LABBE, PETIT, PICOT, SANICAR, GVS, DUCARME

Wholly produced by GRUAU, Microbus is an innovative urban vehicle. It is modular and ecological with particularly well-designed accessibility. After 2 years of development, it entered its marketing and industrialization phase in 2004. The first Microbus was put into service in Laval in April 2004.

#### RESULTS:

- ***Improved responsiveness between design office and planning department thanks to collaborative work***
- ***Time-saving at industrialization level***
- ***Improved management and document traceability***
- ***Reduced document distribution thanks to information sharing***
- ***Data security***
- ***New product data system contributes to the company's ISO9001 V2000 quality approach.***