

BOSTON GROUP, INC.

TAKING MERCHANDISING DISPLAYS TO A NEW LEVEL WITH SOLIDWORKS PREMIUM



By moving from 2D tools to SOLIDWORKS Premium 3D design and analysis software, the Boston Group has dramatically reduced design cycles, fabrication time, and delivery lead-times for its merchandising display products.



Challenge:

Streamline development and fabrication of merchandising display and power systems to compress lead times and accelerate delivery of product to customers.

Solution:

Implement SOLIDWORKS Standard design and SOLIDWORKS Premium design and analysis software.

Results:

- Accelerated delivery of product to customers by 25 percent
- Shortened conceptual design cycles by 50 percent
- Cut sheet metal fabrication time by 80 percent
- Eliminated prototyping for new products

Boston Group, Inc. manufactures a complete line of display, power, and protection products for retail merchandising display applications. Founded in 1937, the company provides retailers and supply chain partners with innovative retail merchandising solutions, including ecofriendly impact protection, modular wiring technology, and powered and nonpowered merchandising displays and raceways.

Operating its own sheet metal fabrication and manufacturing facility, Boston Group has established its position as an industry leader through its commitment to innovative product development, focus on customer needs, and adherence to strict quality and cost controls. In 2000, the display manufacturer's customer focus led it to upgrade its AutoCAD® 2D design tools to a more robust and efficient 3D development system.

According to Engineering Manager Vinny Paolini, Boston Group moved to 3D design for two reasons: streamlining its development and fabrication processes to reduce lead-times and accelerate product delivery, and better showcasing of product concepts to merchandising professionals to help drive sales.

"We realized that we had to move to a 3D platform because our 2D drawings simply weren't working anymore," Paolini recalls. "Our customers are visually oriented merchants who want to aesthetically see how a display will look in the store before making purchasing decisions. We also wanted to become more efficient and save time and money by streamlining our development processes. Shortening delivery and lead-times has become a necessity for competing successfully, and we saw 3D as a means for taking our operations to the next level."

After evaluating leading 3D packages, Boston Group chose SOLIDWORKS® product development solutions, acquiring SOLIDWORKS Standard design and SOLIDWORKS Premium design and analysis software. The company selected SOLIDWORKS software because it is easy to use; includes integrated sheet metal design, structural analysis, and photorealistic rendering tools; and provides access to beneficial partner solutions, such as SheetWorks sheet metal fabrication and nesting software.

"SOLIDWORKS provided exactly what we needed," Paolini says. "The software enabled us to integrate sheet metal design and production, as well as create realistic images of our product concepts. The simulation tools in SOLIDWORKS Premium were an added bonus. They allow us to conduct basic load and strength of materials analyses that have helped us eliminate prototyping in the development of new products."

FASTER DEVELOPMENT, IMPROVED VISUALIZATION

Since implementing SOLIDWORKS software, Boston Group has cut its conceptual design cycles by 50 percent and shortened product delivery times by 25 percent, while simultaneously gaining the capability to output 3D photorealistic renderings of design concepts. Development is faster, and customers can better visualize how Boston Retail products will work in their stores.

"SOLIDWORKS has allowed us to take total control of our processes and streamline our engineering work," Paolini stresses. "The beauty of SOLIDWORKS is that when we present a photorealistic rendering to a customer, we can actually manufacture it. Unlike an artist's rendering, this is not just a pretty picture but a valid, manufacturable concept that's ready to go because of SOLIDWORKS. When a customer wants more technical information, it's fast and easy to save and send an eDrawings® file."



"SOLIDWORKS has helped our development and fabrication processes run like silk, so we can focus on new product development and use engineering time more wisely and effectively."

— Vinny Paolini, Engineering Manager

STREAMLINING SHEET METAL DESIGN AND FABRICATION

Because roughly 80 percent of Boston Group's development work involves sheet metal design and fabrication, much of the company's productivity gains with SOLIDWORKS have come in that area. Using SOLIDWORKS software, the Solution Partner SheetWorks package, and the company's combination laser punch/automated sheet metal forming machine, Boston Group has cut its sheet metal fabrication time by 80 percent.

"With SOLIDWORKS, we've created a direct bridge between design and production," Paolini explains. "This has allowed us to eliminate the need to manually program our fabrication machines. We go straight from SOLIDWORKS to SheetWorks, which enables us to nest parts and save material, to the production machine. There are not as many handoffs, development is faster, and product is shipped to the customers more quickly."

CREATING INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS

Due to the productivity gains achieved with SOLIDWORKS, Boston Group engineers have more time to be creative and innovative in the development of new products. For example, the company recently released the VersaPanel® modular merchandising light display system, which increases power capacity by 40 percent, so light retailers can power more merchandise in less space.

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Using SOLIDWORKS and Solution Partner SheetWorks solutions, the Boston Group has not only cut sheet metal fabrication time by one-fourth, but has also realized materials savings through the nesting of production parts.

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