Manufacturing Software... To Go

If you haven't played around with an iPhone, iPod Touch or iPad, you're missing out. These small machines can hold your entire music, film, photograph and book collections on a single handheld device. They can also direct you to a local restaurant, purchase movie tickets before a show or give you a step-by-step guide to creating the perfect cocktail (In ten years tops, it will probably be able to actually make one for you).

But it's not all fun and games for Apple's line of technological wonders. The business world has caught on as well, creating financial resources, web meetings, analytic reports, sales quotes and even time management applications that executives can take with them on the go. It was just a matter of time before manufacturing followed suit.

As a contract manufacturer, Indiana Technology and Manufacturing Companies (ITAMCO) supplies to industries such as renewable energy, off-highway, mining and oil. The company maintains a strong technology base by keeping up with global trends, including those found outside the manufacturing sector. With a rising number of iPhones and iPads on the production floor, engineers at ITAMCO began toying with the idea of creating

manufacturing apps to assist their workforce.

"At the beginning of the year, we started developing manufacturing applications specifically for the iPhone," says Joel Neidig, systems engineer at ITAMCO. "It's an easy tool for distribution and a great marketing tool as well. We realized there weren't many manufacturing applications available that utilized this type of portable technology."

A Hardness Conversion application seemed the appropriate place to start, according to Neidig. "We purchase a variety of alloy steel forgings for our products, and see a lot of drawings with different hardness scales on them that require conversion on a daily basis. The app was designed so our team members can have quick access to accurate conversion data. It helps everyone from purchasers to receiving inspectors and estimators."

In addition to Hardness Conversion, the company has created GearWare, an app that converts different gear pitch sizes, and Feed Rate Calculator, an application that simply calculates feed rates and speeds for the machinist. All three manufacturing applications are currently available at the iTunes website (*www. apple.com/itunes/*).

The company plans to release more applications in the future, including a portable version of MTConnect, a standard allowing machines to pass data more effectively across the shop floor.

"We've developed an MTConnect iPhone application that can be used to connect to multiple agents so that users can view real-time data generated from their machine tools and controls," Neidig says. "MTConnect will allow a plant manager to check maintenance or quality control issues directly from their own handheld devices."

And the best part of these handy software applications? They are absolutely, 100 percent free of charge. "Most people won't even spend 99 cents on an application unless it's really worth it," Neidig jokes. "We decided to make our apps free of charge and give something back to the manufacturing industry."

For more information, visit *http:// itunes.apple.com/us/app/hardness-conversion/id374298149?mt=8*, *http:// itunes.apple.com/us/app/gearware/ id376891704?mt=8* or *http://itunes. apple.com/us/app/feed-rate-calculator/ id376358618?mt=8*.