



CASE STUDY: BETA LAYOUT

<http://www.pcb-pool.com>

FACT FILE				
Company name	Beta layout			
Business Activity	Design/manufacture of low volume Printed Circuit Boards			
Region	Ireland and Germany			
Number of employees	20			
Business Range	Local	Regional	National	International
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Approximate turnover 2000	20 million D marks (€ 10,225,837)			
Description of market / client /target group	R&D depts, individuals, small scale manufacturers who have a requirement for low volume PCBs. Principle geographic markets served include Ireland, Germany, the UK and other European locations.			
Description activities / products / services	The principle business of the Company is the design and supply of PCB's. The unique selling point is that Beta pools customer orders into one PCB panel for manufacture which creates savings for the buyer.			

CASE DESCRIPTION:

The business

Beta Layout, the Irish operation, has its origins in the foundation of Beta Layout GMBH founded in Germany. The Irish Company commenced operation in Shannon in 1998 with Irish shareholding combined with Beta Germany.

The design and supply of low volume Printed Circuit Boards (PCBs) is the principle business of Beta. In addition the Company offers the following services: SMD Stencils, E-Test, Photoplotting service, Cam service, consulting.

Introduction of e-business

At the heart of the Business is the PCB Pool principle which is the idea of achieving drastic cost reductions for PCB prototypes by sharing setup costs. The typical customers are design teams, individuals, and small scale manufacturers who have a requirement for

from two to several thousand PCB's. The traditional approach for this customer would be to go directly to a PCB manufacturer and because of the low volumes of product required the cost to the customer could be very high. The PCB Pool through a specially designed software system scans orders on a daily basis and sorts them according to type, order size and delivery time. The system then optimizes a panel design from a chosen PCB manufacturer which makes optimum use of panel space. The result is that Beta can take orders for from two prototype PCB's or 2000 PCB's, the set up costs will always be the same.

Beta has in excess of 6000 customers, the majority of which come from the UK or Germany with an increased share coming from across Europe. Typically the Company receives 700 to 800 orders per week.

Orders are received through a combination of online ordering or by fax. Data related to the order specifications/designs are all received online. The design and Pooling operation is all handled in-house through specially designed software. Order and design for the pooled PCB panels are then sent electronically to the chosen manufacturer. All orders at this stage are confirmed by fax to the manufacturer's Sales Department, who tend to prefer a paper transaction.

The manufactured PCB panels are physically sent to Beta, who then separate, test and prepare for individual shipment to the end customers. All shipments are accompanied by an Invoice. The majority of customer payments are made electronically through Beta's bank.

The Beta web site includes online calculation and order, non-binding online pricing, downloads including freeware and shareware to assist the customer. The site was voted among the top ten web sites in Germany in 2000.

Lessons Learnt

Beta has succeeded in growing a very successful business by implementing an innovative business model using many of the benefits of Information and Communications Technology. The core product, a PCB, is a standard industrial commodity for which there are many hundreds of suppliers in a highly competitive market. It can quite easily be argued that the developing e-business process used by the Company is central to the Company's existence and allows a small west of Ireland operation to trade internationally.