



## About 4Front Engineered Solutions:

- 4Front Engineered Solutions, Inc., headquartered in Carrollton, Texas, is the world's leading manufacturer of loading dock equipment for the material handling industry
- Approximately 700 employees  
Customers include warehousing, manufacturing, and distribution center operations
- 4Front's manufacturing facilities in Carrollton, Texas and Reynosa, Mexico and its distribution facility in McAllen, Texas are ISO 9000/9001 certified
- Product lines include Kelley®, Serco®, TKO®, APS Resource®, and LoadHog®
- [www.4FrontES.com](http://www.4FrontES.com)

## 4Front Engineered Solutions relies on Insight Software Suite for JD Edwards to help streamline operations, reduce costs, and increase margins by product line

“With the help of Insight, our accounting team can be more of a service group than ever before, providing information that directly impacts business operations. While Insight definitely saves time, it's even more valuable that the solution enables us to rapidly create reports that help efforts such as decreasing spending and increasing margins by product line.”

**Scott Amond**

Controller at the Carrollton facility

4Front Engineered Solutions

### Business Challenge: Rapid reporting, inquiries, and analysis in JD Edwards

One of the core values that helps 4Front Engineered Solutions maintain its position as an industry leader is attention to detail. Detailed understanding of customers' needs; detailed knowledge of product design, testing, and performance; and detailed understanding of business information are all key to 4Front's ongoing success.

4Front has multiple product lines; multiple manufacturing locations in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico; and more than 130 distributor locations worldwide. Keeping a close eye on this wide-ranging business information can be a challenge, and 4Front implemented Oracle's JD Edwards EnterpriseOne in 2000 to assist with this task. However, reporting and analyzing financial and operational data proved to be time-consuming and was unsatisfactory in terms of the level of detail.

“I could see a monthly number for PPV (purchase price variance), for example, but I could never get a report that would tie to our General Ledger,” says Michael Eastabrook, Director of Operations, 4Front Engineered Solutions. “So I had zero visibility: I could see a number but couldn't understand it, and that undermined my confidence in the financial data,” he notes.

Scott Amond, Controller at the 4Front Carrollton facility, was also keenly aware of the problem. “We wanted our accounting team to provide real-time information, and provide it much faster than we could at that time.” Amond says.



## Benefits:

- Provides detailed, real-time information to drive key business decisions
- Allows operations team to carefully watch variances and efficiently manage resources
- Rapid customization of reports and “on the fly” inquiries save time not only in accounting and finance but also across 4Front business units
- Users easily create reports and inquiries, freeing IT staff to focus on strategic business initiatives
- Enables rapid research leading up to month end and cuts time to complete the close

## Solution:

JD Edwards EnterpriseOne, IBM AS/400

Insight Software Suite for JDE

- Insight Reporting™
- Insight Budgeting™



## Solution: Insight Software Suite for JD Edwards

The accounting team at 4Front was already trying one tool, and they had used the out-of-the-box financial reporting in JD Edwards. “But we wanted a reporting tool that would enable us to give our departments ways to look even deeper at details specific to their areas of responsibility,” Amond adds.

When the team saw a demonstration of the Insight Solution, they saw immediately that it was what they were looking for, according to Amond. “Insight has become an essential part of how we manage the business on a day-to-day basis,” says Eastabrook. “Insight provides the opportunity to manage tactically - we don’t need to wait to find out what happened, we can see the data anytime and make key decisions accordingly,” he says.

Amond describes a few of the capabilities that his team liked immediately. “The way we can set up one report quickly then save it as a template to run again and easily share with other users; having real-time access to the information; the ability to do true business analysis; and how easy it is to export data into Excel: these were some of the things that sold us on Insight,” Amond says.

Today Insight Reporting™ and Insight Budgeting™ are in place at 4Front, and the company is eagerly awaiting the release of the Insight manufacturing modules, according to Eastabrook.

## PPV Reporting Delivers ROI for the Insight Solution

The ability to closely monitor PPV is a good example of the value of Insight, according to Eastabrook. “In the past, we couldn’t get a PPV report that tied to our General Ledger. I spent a year trying to build a workable PPV report for a specific period, and when we installed Insight, I built it in minutes,” he says.

Now 4Front runs a PPV report regularly and Eastabrook reviews all of the variances. He can ensure that products are purchased at the standard price and can also easily identify any exchange rate problems and target specific vendor issues “I have visibility into all the transactions, by supplier, in seconds, and this is huge: Insight has more than paid for itself based on just that one report,” he states.

Wide-ranging Impact on Pricing, Profitability, and Capacity Planning Eastabrook reports that he uses Insight to provide equipment-use analysis that enables him to see immediately if 4Front is gaining the expected value from new equipment. “In so many ways, JD Edwards is a cost accounting system, but we couldn’t get the power out of it until we had Insight,” Eastabrook says. “With Insight, I can see whether a project makes sense and exactly what benefit we get out of it. For example, I built an engineering variance report that gives me the dollars saved on the equipment that we are buying, it’s that exact,” he adds.

4Front has two manufacturing facilities that build dock levelers, and on a regular basis, Eastabrook uses Insight to balance capacity to maintain lead times. “By getting real-time data, I can shift capacity more quickly, and can avoid having one plant overloaded,” he notes.

With accelerating materials costs, Eastabrook needs to determine potential impact on final goods prices on an ongoing basis. “I do a lot of what-if analysis, and with Insight I don’t need to involve the IT team. I can make decisions proactively with detailed data,” he states.

“ *In the past, we couldn’t get a PPV report that tied to our General Ledger. I spent a year trying to build a workable PPV report for a specific period, and when we installed Insight Reporting, I built it in minutes.* ”

Michael Eastabrook

Director of Operations

4Front Engineered Solutions

## Rapid, Easy Information Analysis for Operations and Accounting

4Front has installed the Inventory module of Insight for use by the materials group in Carrollton, according to Eastabrook. "I know I can drive a lot of value out of this Insight module," he says. "For example, if there is an inventory discrepancy when we do a cycle count, I'm confident that Insight Reporting will help us go back and see the various transactions that led to where we are today in JD Edwards," Eastabrook explains. "Insight Reporting is very user-friendly - I picked it up with little effort, and it meets my needs much more quickly than directing a data request to the IT group," he adds.

Eastabrook reports that it's important for him to watch order rates, but before the installation of Insight Reporting™, a detailed level of data was not available because of the time and difficulty required to report it. "One example is that if I want to know how many dock levelers were ordered, I can use Insight Reporting and see how many are booked on a daily basis and I have the item number, booking dollar and other details."

"With Insight we can do projections during the month and know how we are doing," Eastabrook states. "I can easily look at shipments to date plus what I expect to ship and see how that compares to our forecast," he explains. Amond also emphasizes that Insight has enabled him to focus more on information analysis throughout the month. "I'm reviewing so much more data than I ever had time to do before," Amond notes. "I often type in a batch number to look at unposted transactions. I never use JD Edwards to see debits and credits since it's impossible to see both sides, but I can do that easily in Insight," he adds.

Amond reports that before Insight, it was difficult even to figure out how the month was going to turn out to get an income statement. "Now my Insight inquiries for balance and gross margin reports are open nearly all day," he explains. "If I notice a variance, I can make adjustments right away. When I run the numbers, there are no 'shocks' and no need to try to do 20 journal entries at the end of the month," Amond adds.

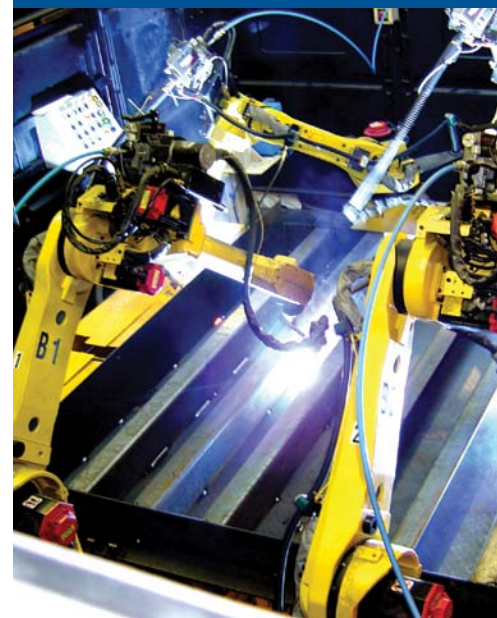
## Fast, Customized Inquiries and Real-time Data for Business Decision Making

The 4Front finance team uses the Insight Software Suite for consolidated financial roll-ups using the AC ledger so they can consolidate across multiple currencies, and the accounting group uses the solution to speed the month-end close. The growing list of inquiries and reports that 4Front teams run regularly in Insight includes: balance and gross margin reports, AR aging reports with customized aging buckets, SG&A, collections reports, AR roll-forward reports, consolidation reporting, integrity verification and reporting, PPV (purchase price variance), and materials variance analysis.

A major benefit of Insight is that it helps ensure accuracy. "I've used Insight to find missing tax codes and category codes, and I plan to do even more integrity checking with the solution," says Courtney Robinson, 4Front Assistant Controller. Eastabrook says he is constantly building his own inquiries and doing fine-tuning like adding more columns using the Configurator module, and Robinson also remarks on the value of the Configurator. "You can easily create your own inquiries and your own layouts and link things together - it's a very helpful way to personalize inquiries and reports to meet the needs of individual users," Robinson says.

Robinson explains that 4Front is transitioning to Insight Reporting™ for aging reports, statements and real-time inquiry. "Doing that in JD Edwards required a lot of customizing, and frankly caused a lot of pain. Insight Reporting will also help with our bank reporting needs, because we can create customized aging buckets to see specifically how the bank wants it reported. Then we can pull in category codes and get all of the information in one shot," she explains.

"Insight uses real-time data every time. So if we invoice, I just hit run again, and everything is there," Robinson adds. Insight is very intuitive, and the 4Front team is deriving high value from the solution with minimal training. "But we know we can get even more out of Insight, and we plan to do advanced training with the InsightSoftware.com team to help us take full advantage of it," Amond says.



## InsightSoftware.com's Solution

Insight Software Suite for JD Edwards empowers users to create simple, real-time inquiries to answer business questions. This improves productivity for reporting, analysis and reconciliations.

Companies using Insight gain quick access to information to increase efficiencies, enhance revenues, reduce costs and optimize cash flows.

## The Bottom Line:

For 4Front Engineered Solutions, InsightSoftware.com's solution provides the detailed data needed for informed decision making across the business. Financial, accounting, and operations groups at 4Front use Insight extensively to save time and gain insights that help drive reduced costs and increased margins.

The ease with which users can create their own reports frees IT staff for core initiatives and enables accounting team members to focus on review and analysis rather than number generation.

## Insight Budgeting™ Enables Focus on Forecasting

"At a previous job, we tried to use another reporting tool and it just never worked - we gave up trying to use it for budgeting," Robinson says. 4Front uses Excel now for much of its budgeting efforts, but recently installed Insight Budgeting™ and plans to use it for forecasting as well as budgeting.

"We have started to focus more on doing outlooks," Amond says. "We envision loading our 'latest and greatest' outlook in Insight Budgeting in detail and using Insight to help us keep track of revised budgets," he says.

## Dramatic Time Savings

"Before we had Insight, I was exporting the whole JD Edwards QBE grid into Excel for my PPV report every Monday," Eastabrook noted. "It took me several hours, and now with Insight it takes 10 minutes!"

Eastabrook had developed a report on bookings that he ran regularly, but it was a manual process that took as much as an hour and a half each time. "With Insight Reporting I've automated this: I open it, hit a button, and I can run it in 10 minutes," he notes.

"We definitely close a lot faster with Insight, and we also save time because we can review our numbers during the month," Amond says. "Between our excellent team and this tool, we close now in about two days, and it used to take as much as a week, often including weekends. We rarely need to work weekends now to complete the close," he says.

"I send out monthly SG&A departmental results," says Robinson. "We do it in five minutes and we're done, and before Insight this would have been very difficult," she explained. "Our IT team is excellent, but building reports with them is iterative, so it used to take more time that way," Eastabrook notes.

"With Insight, users can build their own reports, and our developers in IT have more time to focus on other strategic projects," Kenny London, Application Analyst at 4Front, says. "We are busy with our expansion and JD Edwards rollout to Mexico and Canada, so that IT bandwidth is put to good use," he adds.

## Easy Implementation and Upgrades

4Front implemented Insight Reporting™ in 2005. "The initial implementation was very smooth," Amond says. "If you are smart about setting up JD Edwards, you can do even more with Insight. We use business unit and account category codes extensively and Insight has worked like a charm," he adds. Hope Willingham, IT Applications Manager at 4Front, reports that Insight Reporting™ was easy to set up and use and that upgrading to new versions has always been smooth.

While she was not at 4Front for the initial implementation, Robinson remembers a smooth Insight upgrade. "It was seamless. We didn't have any downtime, and all the reports came over," Robinson says.

## "Terrific" Support from InsightSoftware.com

"Willingham praises the InsightSoftware.com support as "terrific." "When we have had issues, InsightSoftware.com's team has taken us seriously and helped us resolve them. It has all been very positive," Willingham says. "InsightSoftware.com's team has always been there when we needed help," says London. "There was never a time we couldn't get results from them," he adds.

For more information please visit [www.InsightSoftware.com](http://www.InsightSoftware.com)