

# DISTFORM S.L.

## Cooking up advanced commercial kitchen equipment with SolidWorks



*With SolidWorks design and SolidWorks Enterprise PDM product data management software, Distform has accelerated time-to-market for its commercial kitchen equipment while simultaneously cutting costs and increasing design reuse.*

Behind the scenes at many food service operations, an array of gleaming, stainless steel equipment represents the centerpiece of successful commercial kitchens. From banquet halls and hotel chains to schools, hospitals, and nursing homes, the availability of quality equipment and the talent of the resident chef can greatly affect food quality and patron satisfaction. For more than 20 years, Distform S.L. has supplied the work tables, self-service lines, buffet modules, dishwashing systems, food service trolleys, vacuum packagers, blast chillers, and high precision oven ranges that make commercial kitchens go.

The Spanish manufacturer's focus on ergonomics, research, and technology development, and its commitment to incorporating the input of chefs, has allowed Distform to grow at an annual rate of 9 percent despite the recent worldwide recession. The company's success stems in part from the efforts of its skilled product development team, which has created industry innovations like the TekSeries line of advanced vacuum packagers, blast chillers, transport units, and high precision ovens.

According to Product Manager Jordi Aymerich, Distform decided to upgrade its product design platform in 2003 from AutoCAD® 2D software to a 3D mechanical design system to automate sheet-metal design and fabrication, standardize components, and support the company's ambitious product development objectives. "When you're creating real product breakthroughs, like the TekSeries line, for example, you need the best design tools available to tighten tolerances, visualize new concepts, and improve technical details," Aymerich explains. "We wanted to revolutionize the industry and needed not only 3D design tools but also an efficient product data management (PDM) system to bring our inspiration to fruition."

Distform evaluated Pro/ENGINEER® and SolidWorks® design software before selecting SolidWorks as its standard design tool. The kitchen equipment manufacturer soon added the SolidWorks Enterprise PDM system to manage its design data. "We face the same challenge every year: develop new products of high quality and better performance faster," Aymerich says. "We believed that as the easiest 3D package to use, yet with robust sheet-metal design capabilities, SolidWorks would help us succeed."

### Challenge:

Streamline the design of commercial kitchen products to accelerate time-to-market, control costs, and support growth.

### Solution:

Implement SolidWorks design and SolidWorks Enterprise PDM product data management software to automate sheet-metal design and fabrication, increase design reuse, and establish standardized components.

### Results:

- Shortened design cycles by 40 percent
- Accelerated time-to-market by 40 percent
- Cut development costs by 30 percent
- Increased design reuse by 80 percent

## Faster design, lower costs, quicker to market

Since implementing SolidWorks solutions, Distform has realized a range of productivity gains while simultaneously meeting its new product development goals. The manufacturer has reduced its design cycles by 40 percent and is bringing new products to market 40 percent faster than in the past. Using design configuration tools on the TekSeries products, for example, the company produced a complete line of TekVac vacuum packagers, TekTherm high-precision ranges for low-temperature cooking and product regeneration, TekChill blast chillers, and TekTrans holding cabinets for delivering warm food, all in record time.

"The design tables employed on the TekSeries product line were our most elaborate to date," Aymerich stresses. "We are leveraging a variety of materials and technologies, and SolidWorks solutions enable us to more quickly coordinate the development of new products."

## Automating sheet-metal design and fabrication

SolidWorks sheet-metal design and fabrication tools are key contributors to the development of all Distform products. With these capabilities, designers can automate the design of sheetmetal flat patterns while tightening bending tolerances at the same time. In addition to producing the impeccable finishes—with precision polished edges for which Distform is known—SolidWorks sheet-metal design tools have helped the company cut its development costs by 30 percent.

"With more capable fabrication tools, like our numerically controlled folding machines and CO<sub>2</sub> laser beam cutting equipment, and the flat patterns produced in SolidWorks, we have reduced the number of prototypes required and streamlined production, while still maintaining the high-quality finish that has become a Distform trademark," Aymerich says.

## Design reuse, standardized components

Distform's desire to reduce the number of components—in each product and overall—relates to both creative and practical goals. Using the smallest number of parts supports the company's minimalist design style, and also makes manufacturing more efficient. Implementing the SolidWorks Enterprise PDM product data management system has enabled the manufacturer's designers to dramatically improve their design efficiency and lower costs.

"Using SolidWorks and SolidWorks Enterprise PDM, we have been able to achieve greater standardization of parts, reducing the number of components that we use by 70 percent, increasing design reuse (80 percent), and making us far more efficient," Aymerich notes. "With SolidWorks Enterprise PDM, it's so much easier for our designers to search for and find the files that they need, instead of recreating parts. The software has reduced the time required to search for files by at least 95 percent."

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Jordi Aymerich  
Product Manager



Distform used SolidWorks sheet-metal and design configuration tools to streamline development of the TekSeries product family.

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