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ALTIUM 365

ALTIUM DESIGNER

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SUCCESS STORIES

Planning for the Future with Cirris Systems and Altium

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> ## Our electrical engineers and myself have been using Altium 365 every day from our homes to do everything from sharing designs to preserving tight revision and process controls that our bigger aerospace and aviation clients now expect.

Orlan Thatcher

Board Layout Specialist, Cirris Systems

Learn how Cirris Systems, a global leader in cable testing technology, embraced Altium software in the nick of time.

Technological advancements have been a hallmark of the past few decades, from the widespread adoption of internet technology to the smartphones and wireless devices we rely on every day to stay connected.

While few could have predicted the speed at which technology has grown since 1984, back when Salt Lake City's Cirris Systems was a startup company, designing products by hand on a humble kitchen table. Since then, they've become a major leader in the cable testing sphere, placing thousands of cable testers in the hands of customers on every continent.

Internet and computer technologies require the use of extensive cabling systems that have to be tested for quality and functionality. Cirris Systems sought to bridge the gap between small shops and local vendors and the huge government, and defense and aerospace firms that require rigorous cable testing. Little did they know that someday,

everyone from regional cable companies to public and private aerospace companies would rely on their testing products and adapters.

Orlan Thatcher, Board Layout Specialist at Cirris Systems, could never have predicted the demand their services would generate. Thatcher has worked for the company since 1995, so he's witnessed their success firsthand. As he reports, "I couldn't imagine that cable-testing products would be a big business back then."

While keeping ahead of technology has been central to the company's success, finding the right eCAD software tools has been a major challenge at Cirris Systems. The company struggled with six different software platforms before switching to Altium Designer. "As a dedicated PCB layout specialist who currently supports five electrical engineers, I needed a tool that would support my team as well as my eventual replacement."

Altium

Passing the Technology Torch

Thatcher was already familiar with Altium Designer, because of its wide use by engineering peers, most notably VPI Technology Group's Kelly Wigington, founder of the largest Altium User group in North America.

Altium User groups are one of the ways the PCB design community interacts directly with Altium, and few are more passionate about user groups than Wigington. Through his efforts, Altium Designer became more than a PCB tool in Northern Utah. It became almost a prerequisite to getting hired by the region's many engineering firms.

The need for remote work options would have been overwhelming for Cirris System's IT department, but with Altium 365, Thatcher and his team were able to transition to remote work without the need for new servers, VPNs or any downtime.

Wigington's overwhelming enthusiasm and widespread adoption of Altium Designer helped seal the deal for Cirris Systems. As Thatcher elaborates, "Altium has become the primary tool for active electronic design in our area. While I intend to continue working for several more years, it made sense to increase the pool of available talent to choose from, once it is time to hire my replacement. That made Altium a logical choice."

During the adoption process of Altium Designer, Altium's library and component management tool, Concord Pro, was released via Altium 365, a cloud-based platform. This gave Thatcher and his team the ability to harness the power of both tools in one easy solution. The addition of Concord Pro and Altium 365 helped solve multiple challenges Cirris Systems faced, including component data management and revision control.

"We market our product to many industries, and some of those require certifications that mandate tight revision control and process tracking, so there was a real urgent need to consolidate and manage the data associated with our hardware development. Concord Pro hosted on Altium 365 is a good fit to meet these needs," Thatcher explains.
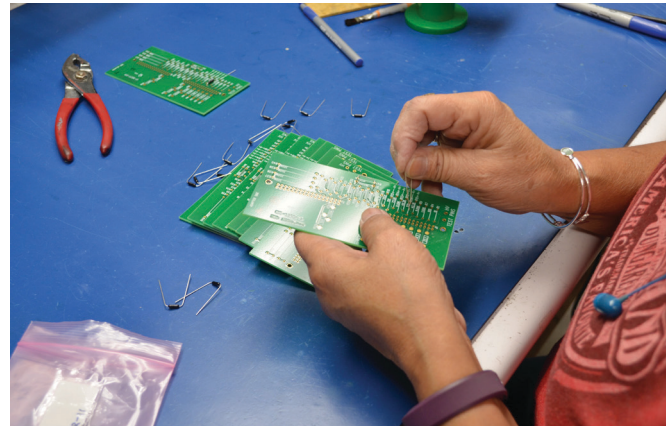
As Thatcher and everyone else at Cirris Systems soon learned, there was another good reason to have Altium 365 on hand.

Altium

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I expect to be using Altium [software] when I retire.

Orlan Thatcher

Board Layout Specialist, Cirris Systems

Coming Through In a Crisis

Cirris Systems, like nearly all businesses in the United States, were caught off guard by the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020. The company went from working onsite to working remotely almost overnight to adhere to strict social distancing guidelines to safeguard against the spread of COVID-19.

Before the implementation of Altium 365, this transition would have all but crippled production.

As Thatcher elaborates, "Before COVID-19, we were developing the next generation of cable testing units internally. There was also an ongoing push, which was in place well before the current lockdown occurred, to make secure access to our work files and tools available wherever our people happen to be."

The need for remote work options would have been overwhelming for Cirris System's IT department, but with Altium 365, Thatcher and his team were able to transition to remote work without the need for new servers, VPNs or any downtime.

"Our electrical engineers and myself have been using Altium 365 every day from our homes to do everything from sharing designs to preserving tight revision and process controls that our bigger aerospace and aviation clients now expect," Thatcher explains, "And once we're ready to return to the office, we'll always be able to work from anywhere, whether it's at home, at all the tradeshows we normally attend or onsite with a client."

As the team continues to explore all of the different ways Altium Designer, Concord Pro and Altium 365 can make their lives easier, Thatcher is confident that he's found the right system to pass onto his replacement and future designers for years to come. "I expect to be using Altium when I retire," he concludes with a chuckle.

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