

# THE MOVE TOWARDS CUSTOMIZATION: 3M JOBBOX SIMPLIFIES THE JOB

The complexity of the electrical industry is legendary — the number of tools and components is staggering and completion of any task requires almost military planning. Most contractors can relate to the situation of delving into a new project, only to discover that a particular tool or key component needed for that job is not on hand. They then realize that the part needed isn't in stock, must be ordered and will take another week to arrive. The frustration factor cannot be measured but this delay can be measured in another way — it has just cost the company time and money. Fortunately that frustration is a thing of the past.

Almost two decades ago, the Electrical team at 3M™, understanding these particular difficulties, devised a means to help those in the industry cope with these issues. The 3M solution began with the offering of a service to their customers referred to as Custom Kitting. Custom Kitting, as the name suggests, involved putting different 3M products normally sold separately, together in a box. It was a good idea and a definite improvement over the existing system but Custom Kitting had several drawbacks. The sheer volume of products that were usually requested for these kits meant a considerable length of time had to be allocated for kit preparation. The lead-time for each kit was in fact quite substantial since these contents were packed by hand. This wasn't the only drawback. The time involved to prepare the invoices was quite lengthy — and not a task that anyone looked forward to labouring over. Perhaps most importantly as well, the significant amount of labour involved in preparing these kits ultimately increased the cost to the consumer. In theory, Custom Kitting was more than just a unique idea — it was a significant value-added service. The ensuing increased lead times and costs however were significant drawbacks.

## Hitting the Drawing Board

The Electrical team at 3M hit the drawing board. They realized the Custom Kits needed modification to better help their customers win. What's the best way to discover how to meet the needs of the customer? Ask. That's precisely what 3M did. They began to ask their customers how 3M could help them succeed.

"We were hearing one common message from the industry," explains Darryl Torhjem, marketing manager, 3M Electrical Products Division. "People loved the idea of having everything they needed for a job ready for them when it was needed, but they didn't like the extra expense and increased lead times that came with the creation of these customized boxes. We listened to what our customers were saying and, as a result, we created the 3M JobBox™ program."

The JobBox program isn't like anything else that exists in the market. Responding to customer need, 3M has devised a way to deliver anything and everything an electrical customer



The JobBox program isn't like anything else that exists in the market. Responding to customer need, 3M has devised a way to deliver anything and everything an electrical customer needs to complete a job without charging any additional costs for the service.

**Continued on page 44**

MAGNA IV Engineering Ltd. manufactures field proven, durable electrical testing equipment in rugged portable cases for all your testing requirements.

- Winding Resistance Testers
- Digital Phase Angle Meters
- Relay Test Sets
- Contact Resistance Testers
- 3-Phase Power Supplies
- Motor Overload Relay Test Sets
- Timers and Portable Power Meters
- Power Supplies from 10-15 Amp, 120/480/600V versions

**Continued from page 43**

needs to complete a job without charging any additional costs for the service. Whether it's the parts needed to assemble a motor lead or install a teck splice — everything needed comes pre-packaged in the JobBox. So, does this mean the job has to be organized weeks in advance of requiring the actual supplies just to give enough time to put the JobBox together? No, when 3M said they listened to their customers' needs, they did and consequently, the cycle times for a JobBox have decreased to the point where there is now a 24-hour cycle time to create a bill for a new product and assembly time can be as quick as one week (depending on the quantity of products required). The components of a JobBox are typically items such as: terminations, splices, heat shrink, motor leads, cable ties, tapes, terminals, resins, lugs, connectors, brackets, nuts, bolts, washers and tools. However, 3M can also include additional components from other manufacturers to meet the customer's needs.

It doesn't stop with the customization of the actual contents of the JobBox though. Recognizing that every job is unique, other components of the program can be customized as well. The customer's installation procedures or instructions for each individual job can be inserted into each JobBox. The JobBox can be customized to address specific customer needs, such as grounding practices or safety requirements. The name of the JobBox or contents can also be customized for any specific job, so the users will know which task or area of the building each JobBox is to be used. The product label can also be referenced to the identification labels on the take-off drawings. It's like having an extra person on the job — ensuring the correct supplies are on hand, ensuring those supplies are at the right locale, ensuring the job specs are being followed — everything but keeping your company on the job.

On any job site, there are enough issues to contend with, without having to be concerned about whether supplies are on hand or not. 3M has taken the major obstacles and issues that contractors, electricians, and other tradespeople face on a daily basis and eliminated most of them. The most significant of savings involved with JobBox use is in time. Time is saved as a result of no



On any job site, there are enough issues to contend with, without having to be concerned about whether supplies are on hand or not. 3M has taken the major obstacles and issues that contractors, electricians, and other tradespeople face on a daily basis and eliminated most of them. The most significant of savings involved with JobBox use, is in time.

longer having to look for all of the components needed to complete a job. But it goes beyond merely stocking the correct components — every aspect from concept to shipping, including WHIMIS, Transportation of Dangerous Goods (TDG) and any other customized labels or instructions is handled by the 3M JobBox team. Completing those aspects of the job, doesn't just save time, it tidies up a process. The time savings continue to add up though when the time gained from no longer having to line up at the tool crib waiting for tools or to track down all of the components needed for a job is factored in. Removing this step can increase productivity and decrease down time. Of course that translates into another saving — cost. The reduced labour cost from the decrease in down time and the cost savings from purchasing everything from one single source of supply are significant. Switching to one purchase order is yet another time saver — a small one but it all adds up. (And who wants to fiddle away time from the job on tasks like purchase orders?) Soft savings in the form of decreased transportation costs to the end user are also a factor to consider.

In this day and age, most companies are moving away from stocking large quantities of inventory. Most businesses have, in the past, carried a variety of products though for those 'just-in-case' scenarios. No one wanted to hold up a job because a single supply wasn't available and wasn't in the company invento-

ry. Not so any longer. Using the JobBox program will decrease inventory costs because it's no longer necessary to plan for or stock for the "what-ifs". When everything is available in the JobBox, there will be no need to carry the inventory — and no need to worry about not having what is needed.

So the JobBox saves times, it saves money — could one little box do any more? What about reliability? With everything spec'd on hand, no substitutions will happen on the job - things will be put into place, just as they should, meaning no compromises, just quality.

Whether it be from working with engineers to create the perfect JobBox to suit individual business needs, incorporating customer feedback to make any job as easy as possible, or helping customize the instructions to be uniform to business practices — 3M is there to help every step of the way. The custom-tailored JobBox is a complete, project-specific, job-specific solution. It's simply the best way to provide control by allowing the specific yet easy ordering of a comprehensive, quality package. Installations are quicker and done correctly with little or no "searching" on the job. Now it's as simple as opening the box and the job can move from start to finish without interruption. Like never before, what's needed is at hand. It's all in the box.

For more information on 3M's JobBox program, call 1-800-3M-HELPS or contact your local 3M Electrical Products representative. **ET**