Beran Instruments have been using the Visionics PCB design tools since 1989. Originally we used the DOS base EE Designer tools, and then migrated through the early Windows versions to EDWinXP. The backward compatibility with these very old designs is important to us, since we have many customers, particularly in the military sector, who ask for remakes of very old products. We currently have around 180 legacy designs that predate EDWin, and a further 50 EDWin designs.

We are currently running 3 seats of EDWinXP, interfaced with the Cadence Allegro auto-router, which is truly awesome. Our designs run from the basic interface amplifier, through to complex multilayer boards (up to 10 layer, 2000 components), with very dense BGA layouts for avionics customers. Our design activity tends to be lumpy, so we use a mixture of in-house designers, subcontractors, and bureau services to ensure we can always resource new projects.

The biggest improvement for us in recent years has been the inclusion of the IPC 355 and 356 output formats, which allow our PCB manufacturers to verify Gerber data against the design net list. This has caught several design flaws which would have resulted in unusable PCBs.

As with all software, we have had some problems with functionality, but these are generally resolved within a few days by the issue of either a custom patch, or an update through the online update service. The fact that we are still using EDWinXP after 16 years with the product family indicates that it continues to deliver the designs we need at an acceptable price point.

Dr Tony Brown
Technical Director
Beran Instruments Ltd, England
tony.brown@beran.co.uk