



SGS Germany GmbH



Professional laboratory management at the Center for Quality Engineering

The Center for Quality Engineering tests and qualifies a broad range of mechanical, electrical and electronic products: telephones, toasters, electronic toys, switching cabinets, storage modules, vehicle components, tractors and even Mars robots from time to time. The business operating areas of the testing laboratory are highly diversified and include telecommunications, EMC (electromagnetic compatibility), product safety as well as environmental simulation and climatic factors, mechanical impact and loads, and corrosion.

At SGS Germany in Munich the leading edge testing laboratory facilities spread out over a floor space of more than 5,500 square meters. Around 70 members of staff are active in the EMC halls, the technical laboratories as well as operating the climate chambers and at some 90 workplaces, processing around 1,000 assignments every year. In depth staff know how covers many industrial sectors, from information and telecommunication technology on to automotive and medical engineering through to automation technology or the electronic industry. In addition to standard testing routines, SGS also offers consulting services covering the entire product life cycle, from product creation through to market launch. All of the business operating areas hold special accreditations in addition to the DIN EN ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation. The foundation of today's Center for Quality Engineering was already laid back in 1921, with the inception of the Institute for Quality Technology as part of Siemens AG. The testing laboratory has been part of SGS Germany GmbH since 2008, a company of the SGS Group that ranks as a global leader in testing and inspecting, verification and certification.

The basic situation

The Center for Quality Engineering is an independent accredited testing laboratory that performs all of its assignments for external clients. The history of the laboratory and milestones on the way to its present status include the many years as part of the Siemens corporation. It was in this period of time, at the beginning of the year 2000, that the decision was made – as part of ongoing, further professionalization – to implement a uniform handling and management tool with a focus on the processes at the testing laboratory. The tool was to partially replace the Microsoft Office products Excel, Outlook and Project as well as SAP software. Market research revealed that standardized project planning programs would not meet the laboratory specific demands. A suitable solution was found at dacore Datenbanksysteme AG. Towards the end of the nineties, the company had started to map and replicate the special requirements of testing laboratories in the TLP laboratory management system (TestLabPlus).

“The options of making short term and flexible adaptations and adjustments are one of the unbeatable strengths of tailored, individual software. This flexibility would be inconceivable with standard software.”

Philipp Zinnkann, Business Administration,
SGS Germany GmbH, Center for Quality Engineering,
Munich

The solution

Engaging in intensive cooperation with the software house, functions such as master data management, generation of offers with a uniform CI, order handling, project and order steering as well as an SAP interface were initially defined. The new software ProCon (project and process controlling) was individually developed for the Munich based company within the course of one year and installed at 85 workplaces at the end of 2001. Following the continuous further development of the program in the context of rapid prototyping development, in 2004 the test equipment administration modules, which had been performed in Excel to date, as well as testing report generation and integrated document management were installed. At the time, a key aim was to considerably reduce the period of time between the generation and the release of testing reports and to harmonize and automate the reports across all laboratory areas, thereby generating a uniform quality standard.

The advantages

To the same extent to which organizations and therefore the processes in the laboratories of today's SGS Germany GmbH are subject to continuous change, dacore Datenbanksysteme AG repeatedly adjusts and adapts the software in close cooperation and dialog with the project managers involved in laboratory operations. To date, ideas and suggestions for change issues come from both directions and it is clearly evident time and time again that software developers who are extremely well versed with the processes of their customers deliver significant advantages. Currently, the entire performance recording is being completely revised and simplified, true to the "keep it simple" approach. In the course of the years the processes and work sequences had changed again and again, and operability and usability were no longer practice oriented. This, in turn, incurred negative effects on user satisfaction and data quality. The graphic user interface newly developed in 2008 has dramatically simplified program operability, even for new laboratory staff. It is exemplary of the proactive, flexible approach of the software house. The initiative for the new interface

came from dacore. The supplier assignment module was installed in synch with the new user interface. The tool had become necessary in connection with the new company status and provided the experts in Munich with an overview of all of their own orders and the in-house laboratory procurement handling. The sales area also benefitted from the capabilities of the tool. Since the opening of the laboratory to the free market, the sales activities had been ramped up considerably. In this context, intensive use is made of the customer relations management module. The latter is used for maintaining customer master data, customer enquiries, the documentation of contacts, as well as for order calculation and generation with specific text blocks in combination with the Microsoft Office suite.

Outlook

In connection with the commercial order handling and processing within the SGS Group the issue of linking the laboratory management software with the existing SAP system is once again on the agenda. This is enabled by a new booking tool and an interface to performance recording in SAP that will be implemented at the change of the year in 2010. Future plans envisage integrated deadline and resources planning that are currently still handled in Microsoft Project, as well as the standardization of order control by way of an individual messaging system to be added to ProCon.

dacore services

- Requirements analysis
- Development of requirements specifications
- Development of the individual software ProCon
- Client-server solution with SQL-database
- Development of interfaces, including SAP among others
- System installation and launch
- Continuous system maintenance and expansion
- Technical support



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