



M-Files Success Stories 2009

Smoothing the Transition to ISO 9000 with Effective File Control

Bentley Instruments looks for a simple way to store, share and retrieve standards documents



Moving your manufacturing to ISO 9000 certification can open doors to foreign markets, but in the process it can also open the floodgates of paperwork. Certification can multiply the number of documents needed for each small step in product development. International standards spread instructions throughout your workflow on everything from scientific and engineering guidelines to what to print on safety labels. Accompanying the technical standards are the forms that detail the procedures and processes you followed, and of course, instructions on how to file all these forms for certification.

This was the case at Bentley Instruments, which started in the early 1980s out of Chaska, Minnesota to apply computer technology to the chemical testing of milk products. Today, Bentley creates sophisticated hardware for quick breakdowns of nutritional contents, like fat, protein and lactose, as well as accurate analysis of other components, like the number of bacteria or somatic cells.



Henrik Lyder, principal of Bentley Instruments, discovered a demand for this specialized technology all over the globe -- or at least wherever there's a population of cows. The staff in the Minnesota office began to engineer Bentley's line of products according to international standards. Today, 70 percent of its business is export, with dairy customers in over 30 countries worldwide. But with the global playing field came a huge library of materials from the International Standards Organization.

"Initially, we were keeping all our ISO 9000 manuals and instructions in 3-ring binders and folders. More would come in and after a while we had a lot of loose leaf paperwork lying around," recalls Lyder. "Through the process of becoming certified, we realized we didn't have adequate control of our paper flow."

Scanning the ISO documents into digital form did not quite solve all the problems without any formalized information management. Bentley needed a more systematic way to track, share, and retrieve ISO guidance, as well as related part and product information. Since standards are updated over time, engineers in Minnesota and support staff in Europe needed to know they were both using the correct guidance. Different teams working off of different standards would constitute a serious loss of time and money.

A DMS for a growing company

So Lyder looked around for the best document management system for his unique small-business/global company situation. "I shopped around for a file management software application that was straightforward and simple to work with," says Lyder. "I looked at a number of solutions that were extraordinarily expensive and I looked at some that were too simplistic to do what we needed them to do. I found the M-Files file management solution to be capable of delivering the functionality we needed to manage our content without spending an arm and a leg."

The big reason why the M-Files content control scheme was effective, but not overly complex, was the way it identified files. Rather than a file path, M-Files tagged documents with keywords that the software stores as database metadata. The keywords associate a final design file with the associated standard and compliance documentation, along with all other essential tracking information: product number, engineer, date and time of last modification, and so on.

M-Files placed Bentley's entire library of ISO guidance and compliance, final instrument design drawings, and product manuals in a single virtual file repository accessible online from anywhere.

"I liked the way the document management software integrated into the Windows operating system," explains Lyder. "I looked at other systems where there were separate programs which you had to start up and go through all these log-on procedures every time you wanted to use it. The fact that M-Files document management was using the same Windows commands and access points, such as the standard save and open in any application, made it a really easy decision for me."

From digital archiving to enterprise content management

What began as a paperless way to store the company's ISO library has grown into a new way of bridging the communication gap between offices and managing content for the entire enterprise. M-Files acts as a central file depository for Bentley Instruments' product development work.

"Right now we are using it for all of our specific ISO documentation as well as our final designs," says Lyder. "We've adopted it for all our documents related to electronics and schematics, and for all of our specific construction diagrams -- PDFs of SolidWorks models -- so our manufacturing crew knows how to assemble parts correctly and consistently."

“Adopting a digital asset management system ensured our people could find the most current documents -- the most up-to-date designs, the most up-to-date instructions on how to build, and the most up-to-date manuals -- instantly, rather than having them rummage through a paper library or a chaotic PC folder system,” says Lyder. “And we now have it in one location, but accessible on both continents. As we go along, I find myself putting more and more of our company content in M-Files.”

Looking to milk new markets, Bentley Instruments found a way to expand globally without drowning in document overflow through M-Files.

About Bentley Instruments

Bentley Instruments Inc. specializes in the development, manufacturing, and worldwide distribution of analytical instruments for milk and milk products. Bentley instruments are designed to the highest quality standards for reliability, simplicity, and affordability. Bentley Instruments has a strong presence in the international market, with over 70% of product sales outside the US. Bentley’s service team is positioned to meet the needs of our customers all over the world. For more information, please visit: www.bentleyinstruments.com.