

Networking Locations Globally

CAQ in an intercultural environment

PRETTL HAS SUCCESSFULLY STANDARDIZED AND CENTRALIZED ITS QUALITY MANAGEMENT WITH A NEW CAQ SYSTEM.

The merger of production sites under one umbrella company can lead to valuable synergy effects. The globally active Prettl SWH GmbH, headquartered in Pfullingen, also wanted to take advantage of this when it decided in 2016 to standardize and centralize quality management at all locations of its “SWH” business unit with the help of a uniform CAQ system. In the search for a suitable software provider, the choice fell on iqs Software GmbH from Germany. In the meantime, the iqs modules have been implemented at six Prettl locations, and the interim results exceed the high expectations. The entire roll-out at all sites is to be completed by 2025.

Bühl / Pfullingen - The Prettl Group is divided into five business units. Prettl generates about one third of its sales with the business unit “SWH” (Sensor Wire Harnesses). Prettl SWH is the world market leader in cable harnesses and produces cables and cable adapters. Around 7,500 employees at 13 locations on five continents generate annual sales of around 330 million euros. *“Our declared goal in 2016 was to network all production sites in such a way that we can present a uniform, high quality standard to our customers,”* says Mathias Reips, Director Global Quality PRETTL SWH* GmbH.

Initial situation

Prior to 2016, the sites operated relatively autonomously and independently of each other, despite overlapping content. There was little communication, which meant that data and information were often neither up-to-date nor consistent. Document handling did not correspond to the technical possibilities. There were many isolated solutions for the processes at the sites: SPC, test equipment management or sampling

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were each operated with their own software modules. Reips: *“We wanted to counteract these deficits with the development of common quality standards and better network the sites with a professional communication culture. From the synergy effects, we hoped for both a reduction in costs and an increase in efficiency as well as higher customer satisfaction.”* The prerequisite for this step was the implementation of a common CAQ system for all sites.

The right CAQ system

In the search for suitable software, four providers were shortlisted. *“Our decision fell on iqs Software GmbH from Germany, because its CAQ system brings with it the highest degree of integration and a very well thought-out principle of inheritance. In addition, it allows optimal data transfer not only between the individual CAQ modules, but also between different locations. We had already made initial positive business contacts with iqs in 2013,”* says Reips. As a result, Prettl SWH tested a license for the iqs CAQ overall system for global use. After a short pilot and evaluation phase on a small scale at three sites with a central server in Frankfurt and a unidirectional interface to the SAP system, the final decision was made in September 2017 to successively install the complete iqs CAQ system at all Prettl SWH sites.

Implementation with global key user

To implement the software at all sites, Prettl appointed a local employee as the “Global iqs Key User”. All information from the sites converges with this person, and only they communicate directly with iqs and the global quality management of Prettl SWH. He was conscientiously prepared for the country-specific characteristics of the individual sites with intercultural training. *“This aspect was very important to us from the very beginning,”* emphasizes Reips. *“After all, the positive contact and his regular visits to the sites make a significant contribution to acceptance and thus to the success of the implementation.”* As a matter of principle, the local key users are trained by him on site, and he is also available to them around the clock if necessary.

Roll out of the iqs modules

Before the actual roll out of the CAQ software at a site, a training video prepares the employees involved with the implementation. This includes clear “step by step” instructions that are the same for every location (“one methodology to all locations”) and are constantly being developed further. Only local key users are present at the initial training, who then train their local iqs teams. Initial resistance from employees quickly

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turned into enthusiasm because they were convinced of the benefits of the new modules and the new system. The iqs modules FMEA, Inspection and Control Plan (PP/CP), Inspection Data Acquisition (PDE), Test Equipment Management (PMV), Initial Sample Inspection Report (EMPB) and Measures Management (MM) have now been implemented at six locations.

Lower costs ...

“The use of the iqs CAQ system and the associated networking of the six sites have already paid off,” says Reips, drawing a very positive interim balance. *“Costs have dropped significantly and customer satisfaction has increased.”* For example, the very high licensing costs for the many isolated software solutions are now a thing of the past. The digitization and consistency of the system has reduced paperwork by up to 100 percent. *“That equates to a high four-digit sum,”* says Reips. Drawings no longer have to be searched for and printed out in incoming goods, and stamping is now automatic. Says Reips, *“The time savings are up to 50 percent, which is huge!”* Prettl has created a main FMEA that only needs to be adapted by the individual sites. This leads to a further cost reduction of up to 40 percent. Line personnel have been equipped with tablets that communicate directly with the server and exchange data in a timely manner. This eliminates up to 40 percent of the walking distances, and the processes have also become significantly faster and more transparent. All the effects of the software changeover are recorded in a standardized document that can be accessed by all sites.

... and higher quality

“The feedback from our customers reflects our experience. One major business partner even attested to a leap in quality. It’s important to remember that quality can tip the scales when it comes to awarding contracts,” says Reips, who also sees the positive external impact of the new standardized CAQ system.

Outlook

The year 2020 was a year of consolidation at the six sites. In close cooperation and with the support of iqs, problems were solved and processes optimized. From 2021, further iqs modules such as complaints management (RKM), audit and supplier evaluation, and production tools on the machines for process monitoring in manufacturing will now be introduced. The entire roll out at all 13 sites is to be completed by 2025. Subsequently, the iqs CAQ system is to be extended to the other business units.

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To the Point

Looking back, Reips sees the two most important success factors for the global networking of quality management in the choice of the right CAQ system and in the right employee motivation. *“We deliberately took into account the cultural characteristics of the locations. And we gave the global and local key users the appropriate appreciation and the necessary trust. That motivates and was the door opener for them to get involved with the new software. The iqs CAQ system quickly convinced the employees and management with the great time and cost savings, the high degree of transparency and the current and consistent data basis. The support from iqs has also always been exemplary.”*

iqs Software GmbH
Erlenstraße 13c
77815 Bühl (Baden)
Germany

Phone +49 7223 28148-0
info@iqs.de
www.iqs-caq.com

iqs
CAQ with a difference