# Global Food Manufacturer
Tracks Operations

MICROSOFT SHAREPOINT USE CONTINUES TO INCREASE AS MORE CORPORATE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) departments adopt it for providing a company-wide infrastructure for collaboration, information sharing and content management. Global manufacturers are also leveraging the value this tool provides, from sharing of contact lists and files to streamlining manufacturing processes.

One example is a global food manufacturer that uses Share-Point to increase visibility and access to its critical safety, downtime, quality and other operational data. The manufacturer previously used paper-based, comprehensive workflow processes for handling quality production incidents, injury to plant personnel, safety violations, and equipment/line downtime events.
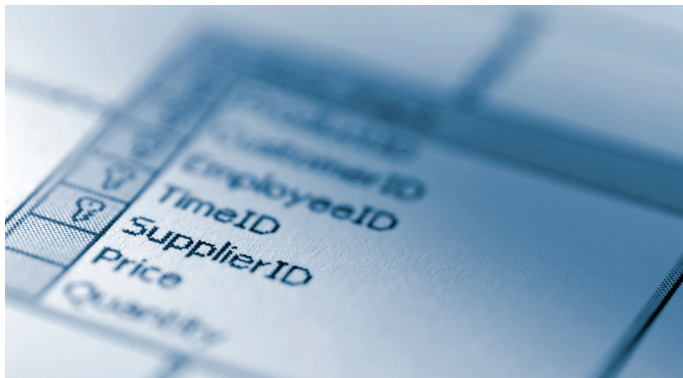
In the past, various team members used paper documents to manage the workflows as incidents occurred. For a particular event, employees manually recorded basic facts, notified relevant plant personnel, investigated and collected further information, checked to see if the same type of event had occurred previously, informed higher level management of more severe events, developed corrective actions, signed-off and approved the corrective action, and verified that the corrective action was successful.

The existing paper system had several drawbacks. Only one person could work on the system at a time, causing inefficiencies and frustrations. There was a chance that master documents could be lost or misplaced. In addition, it was difficult and time-consuming to organize and distribute the latest information to team members, and remote access for updates was impossible.

AUTOMATED WORKFLOWS

SharePoint automated the workflows, provided multi-user and remote access, improved visibility of the information, and improved security with user password protection and tracking. The new automated, web-based system was accessible from any computer within the manufacturing site, without requiring installation of software on each computer. In addition, the system integrated with the manufac-

Switching from a manual system to an automated SharePoint system helped one manufacturer manage workflows that track critical events.

turer's existing SharePoint sites, automatically backed up data, and was easily modified as the workflows were improved.

The new SharePoint based system provided additional benefits to the company, including:

- Allowing the manufacturer to leverage existing tools such as InfoPath, which was used to enter data within SharePoint.
- Automatically notifying proper personnel that an event has occurred, based on alerts established in the workflow.
- Requiring personnel to follow standard procedures for every type of incident. This is inherent in automated workflows, where certain actions are required before advancing to the next step.
- Providing checks to see if an incident had occurred repeatedly, so personnel can investigate why previous corrective actions did not solve the problem.
- Providing search capability of the centrally stored information.
- Allowing centralized storage of all documents associated with an event, such as pictures, reports, etc., to safeguard files and improve access.
- Listing all events and their current status so all users have access to the latest information, in near real time.
- Providing automated e-mails to designated personnel when there is a task they are assigned to complete or an item requiring their approval.

AUTOMATICALLY TRACING ACTIONS

Switching from a manual, paper system to an automated Share-Point system helped this manufacturer manage workflows that track critical manufacturing events, streamlined processes, and provided an easier-to-use system with greater flexibility and functionality. The system also provided an infrastructure for expanding to additional workflows.

Finally, the manufacturer now can roll out the system to other manufacturing sites, providing the company with a re-usable system that is based on their current best practices. Corporate-wide visibility now becomes possible, since all of the manufacturing sites have adopted the same automated workflows. ⓐⓦ

Richard Phillips is manufacturing intelligence product manager at Polytron, Inc., www.polytron.com, a Duluth, Ga.-based systems integrator and associate member of the Control Systems Integration Association. More information appears about CSIA appears at www.controlsys.org.