



ABBOTT INFORMATICS PARTNERS WITH BAYER CROPSCIENCE

The Global Formulation Technology within Bayer CropScience had to replace their old lab data system operating at multiple sites due to insufficient functionality and no longer existing maintenance. After reviewing their options, Bayer CropScience enlisted Abbott Informatics to help with the STARLIMS solution. A single LIMS would centralize their data and streamline their formulation and laboratory activities. This daunting task required a close collaboration between the supplier and client.

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ALEXANDRA MICHEL, BAYER CROPSCIENCE PROJECT LEAD

THE BAYER CROPSCIENCE COMPANY

Bayer is an innovation-driven company with a long tradition in research and development. The Bayer Group mission “Bayer: Science For A Better Life” is the foundation of what Bayer CropScience strive to achieve within the agricultural sector. Their contribution to society is based on helping to ensure an ample supply of high-quality food, feed, fiber and renewable raw materials. With their expertise in high value seeds, innovative chemical and biological crop protection solutions and their daily work – in the lab and on the ground – Bayer CropScience focuses on how they can help farmers across the globe.

PARTNERING WITH ABBOTT INFORMATICS

The Global Formulation Technology within Bayer CropScience contributes to the development of commercial

plant protection products, safe for users, consumers and the environment, which exhibit optimal biological activity, are easily registrable with authorities to allow for legal use, can be produced on an industrial scale, are convenient and easy to use, are compatible with their packaging and application technique. In 2011 Bayer CropScience decided to replace the existing Waters Q-DIS/QM with a new LIMS. The Project Lead, Alexandra Michel, summed up the most important requirements for the solution:

- Capable of managing all internal lab processes, from the creation of recipes, batches, samples to result entry and reporting.
- Enough flexibility to allow changes in work processes, instruments, analysis specifications, regulations, and so on.
- Ability to adapt reports of the system in-house.
- The supplier’s project team had to act as a true partner.

Bayer CropScience evaluated several suppliers to make an offer and narrowed it down to four. These four were invited to present full day product demos and met with each supplier’s project teams. Mid of 2012, STARLIMS was chosen. Michel stated, “Most systems are at the same level as far as functionality is concerned. STARLIMS distinguished itself by offering a very open system with great flexibility and the best mixture between available functionality and usability. Moreover, we had confidence in their project team.”

IMPLEMENTATION

The Abbott Informatics project team implemented a gap analysis, headed by Saskia Tyler. This resulted in a project plan with several implementation phases for the prioritized functionality (essential, urgent, important, good to have, nice to have).

Supported by the external Project Manager Dr. Azad Chaushli on Bayer CropScience side the implementation concept was created and performed in an agile approach with multiple shorter implementation phases followed by user tests. This way corrections could be implemented very early and the code stayed close to the real user requirements. The system is used in Germany, the US and Japan, so the special needs for all the sites and working processes had to be respected.

COMPLEXITY

The project team faced a broad variety creating one system used worldwide. There were different needs for functionality which were not valid for all groups using the system and additional functions needed due to authority requests.

Probably the most complex task was to consider how to create all needed functionality in one system in an efficient and user friendly way, so that all groups have the functionality available needed, but are not affected by functionality not needed or wanted at their site.

Michel states, "For lab employees, the benefits of a new system are not always immediately obvious. For this reason, we wanted to deviate as little as possible from the existing work processes. All small and larger adjustments were well resolved by Abbott Informatics. In most cases, it was possible to achieve this with standard functionalities. This helped to promote acceptance among employees, which is not always an easy matter. For the same reason we selected several key users – 10 in total – as part of the

selection team, which were involved in the project from an early stage."

TRAINING

During the implementation period, these key users participated in Abbott Informatics' Train the Trainer program. Participants got a head start in learning to use the LIMS and could later help familiarize their colleagues with the system. After the system is live, these key users have access to more functions than end users and remain their first point of call for more information.

Michel believes that the close communication between the Abbott Informatics Germany project team and Bayer CropScience was a strong point in favor of STARLIMS. "In the first six months we obviously saw them on a regular basis, but in time we communicated more and more by phone, any questions and/or minor issues were resolved by Abbott Informatics monitoring our system via remote access."

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

According to Michel, "The benefits are evident. In the past we worked with a system which was hardly maintainable and vulnerable to software and input errors. The user acceptance was very low. Now with STARLIMS everything has become much more easily traceable. Moreover, in the past we did not have any means of control over how data were entered. Now the risk of input errors is significantly reduced.

We are thus able to say that STARLIMS performs according to expectations and has even provided more benefits than anticipated."

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