

Management of development projects: High quality, more transparency and up to 40 percent less administration

Excel continues to be a popular project management tool, despite the fact that it makes it impossible to generate a shared view of the project when you work with external parties – a flaw that is particularly troublesome when projects become more complex. Is every project member working on schedule? Do all of them operate with the latest project files? A SupplyOn solution solves these problems by making all relevant information and documents of a development project available to the entire team on a central platform.

The challenge

A large tier-1 automotive supplier had to implement a uniform process for all its development projects throughout the enterprise in order to ensure high quality standards. While the old quality planning process was based on the standardized APQP (advanced product quality planning) methodology, it was depicted in Excel, which caused a multitude of problems:

- Project documents were not filed in a structured manner and could not be accessed by all parties.
- People worked on different versions of the project documents.
- Deadlines could not be tracked transparently.
- The process also lacked transparency and simplicity for the suppliers, especially when they had to operate with various Excel templates from different plants.

In addition, the administrative effort was extremely cumbersome. Project managers who had to oversee several projects simultaneously had a hard time keeping things under control: Where do my projects stand? Is one of my projects getting out of control? To answer questions like these, project managers often had to consult a multitude of Excel lists and project schedules.

The SupplyOn solution

SupplyOn offers a web-based APQP solution for challenges like these. It allows to maintain project schedules and documents centrally for all participants. That way, all parties involved in the project, whether internal or external, have access to the current project status and all associated documents.

The solution provides optimum support for the project manager, presents him with a transparent picture of the project's progress, automatically reminds him of appointments and deadlines, and relieves him of most administrative tasks.

On the basis of standardized templates, the tool ensures that each development project of the enterprise has the same structure irrespective of the location. It also offers comprehensive reporting so that management is given a clear view of all ongoing projects and their progress at all times.

BENEFITS AT A GLANCE

- The administrative outlay for development projects is reduced considerably by up to 40 percent.
- The entire process from start to tracking to archiving is automated. Activities that don't add value, such as setting up the project, tracking of milestones, reconciling the project status, etc. are handled by the system.
- Bottlenecks can be identified before they become a problem for the development project which has a positive effect on the ppm figures.
- Management can check the current status of ongoing development projects with one mouse click.

Project details

As a first step of the implementation of the web-based APQP process, three templates were defined in close cooperation with the departments handling mechanical and electronic parts. These three templates – basic, standard or advanced – all cover a different scope and are used depending on the project's risk, experience with the development partner, and the complexity and criticality of the respective part.

After the new online process had been tested based on the defined templates in a pilot phase, it was successively rolled out globally at 70 locations with over 1,000 internal users and several hundred suppliers. Parallel to the rollout, several backend systems were linked to SupplyOn.

Thanks to the backend integration, setting up a new development project is now quick and easy. As soon as a component has been approved, data such as the part number, material ID number, commodity class and milestones are automatically transferred from the backend system to the project template.

While a project is ongoing, this backend link enables comprehensive business warehouse reporting with multiple layers being depicted and projects being summarized in an overview report. The automated archiving system ensures that project data is filed in a structured manner and can be easily retrieved even years later.

The project data automatically flows into a balanced scorecard, which delivers important results for project assessments and provides valuable information for future development process improvements.

The screenshot displays the 'Project details' page for 'Project: pha-006 / 111'. It features a navigation bar with tabs for 'Project Information', 'Project Team', 'Project Schedule', 'Actions', 'Change Log', 'Status Report', and 'All Attachments'. Below the navigation, there is a 'Sample Schedule' table and a 'Project Schedule' table.

Status	Samples	Quantity	Responsible	Requested Date	Confirmed Date	Closing Date	Open Actions	Comment
●	A sample	10	Project Le...	01.02.2014			Actions (0)	
●	B sample	10	Project Le...	20.04.2014			Actions (0)	

Status	Work Packages	Responsible	Requested Date	Confirmed Date	Closing Date	Attachm.	Open Actions	Comment
●	pha-006 / 111 - trg-SEC Tools Ltd. (DEMO COMPANY)					Attachm. (1)	Actions (2)	
●	PLAN and DEFINITION Program	Project Le...						
●	APQP Plan & Timing chart	Project Le...				Attachm. (1)	Actions (1)	
●	PPM Prediction (3stages)	Project Le...				Attachm. (0)	Actions (0)	
●	Customer Inputs	Project Le...				Attachm. (0)	Actions (0)	
●	Marketing Strategy	Project Le...				Attachm. (0)	Actions (0)	
●	Benchmark Data	Project Le...				Attachm. (0)	Actions (0)	

SupplyOn Project Management provides a shared view of the project schedule