Barr boosts quality management and workplace safety

Cutting paperwork and increasing efficiency with solutions from IBM Lotus and Codel Software

Overview

Business challenge

To increase quality, safety and efficiency and support ISO 9001 certification, Barr wanted to replace paper-based processes with automated workflows that would be accessible to employees working at customer sites or any other location.

Solution

Barr implemented Activ Quality Manager and Activ Absence Control from Codel Software, which integrate with the company's existing IBM® Lotus Notes® and Domino® environment to provide comprehensive automation and improved insight into key processes.

Barr Ltd is one of the UK's leading engineering companies. Its four divisions provide products and services for construction, industrial, manufacturing and environmental projects. The company has its head office in Paisley, and employs more than 700 staff, many of whom spend most of their time working at client sites nationwide.

"Barr is particularly well-known for large-scale construction projects – for example, we have built around 40 sporting stadia and more than 50 supermarkets across the UK over the past few years," says Stuart Stark, IT Director at Barr. "We are also involved in quarrying, and in manufacturing products such as steelwork and precast concrete, which we use in our own projects and also supply to the industry. Quality, health and safety and environmental management are key concerns in all areas of our business."

Meeting ISO 9001 requirements

The company's manufacturing divisions were in the process of achieving and maintaining ISO 9001 certification, and began looking for a solution that could help meet a critical requirement: the management of non-conformance reports (NCRs).

"Identifying and tracking non-conformances is important for quality management because if the same problems keep occurring in the same areas, NCRs can help to identify the problem and find a solution," explains Stuart Stark. "The problem was our existing NCR process depended on staff and managers filling in paper forms, which were then sent to head office for collation into spreadsheets – a slow and cumbersome process. We developed a small database to handle NCR management instead, but it was difficult for users to access if they weren't working on-site. To make things easier and encourage users to file more frequent, more detailed reports, we decided to find a web-based solution."

Business Benefits

- Enables easy analysis of quality and safety issues, helping managers identify trends and resolve common problems more quickly.
- Simplifies the process for employees submitting holiday and sickness absence requests.
- Provides greater visibility and rapid filing of quality and safety reports, encouraging users to share data and collaborate more effectively.
- Eliminates many paper-based processes, reducing administration workload for head office staff.

Finding the right solution

Barr looked at various solutions before choosing Activ Quality Manager from Codel Software.

"There weren't many products on the market that could meet our requirements," comments Stuart Stark. "The big advantage of Activ Quality Manager was that it included a specific module for NCR management, and was capable of being customised to align with our precise business needs. As a bonus, it is built on IBM Lotus Notes and Domino, which we were already using for corporate email. So we saw the Codel Software solution as a good way to extend our existing investment while leveraging the powerful communication and collaboration features of the IBM Lotus platform."

Meeting additional business needs

As the project progressed, Barr realised that the Activ Quality Management solution could be extended to replace other previously paper-based processes too – including health and safety, customer feedback and environmental management reporting. Working closely with the Codel Software team, Barr designed new automated workflows to support these processes, and as a result will soon be able to eliminate paper forms and spreadsheets in most areas of the business.

"When we started out on this project, we were mainly focusing on the requirements for ISO 9001 – but the Codel Software solution offers so much more," says Stuart Stark. "We are now able to take a much more business-focused approach to analysing our data. For example, we can use the reporting tools in Activ Quality Manager to look at trends in our quality data and identify problems at the product design or manufacturing stages. This means we can address issues before the products reach the construction site, which avoids bigger problems later on."

Solution Components

Software

- IBM® Lotus Notes® and Domino®
- Codel Activ Quality Manager
- Codel Activ Absence Control

IBM Business Partner

- Codel Software

"The combination of IBM Lotus Notes and Domino with the solutions from Codel Software gives us a much more efficient way to manage key business processes and helps reduce workload for employees in the field and at head office."

— Stuart Stark, IT Director at Barr

Enhanced absence management

As a second phase of the project, Barr decided to implement another Codel Software product: Activ Absence Control. This provides an automated workflow that allows employees to see how many leave days they have remaining and submit holiday requests quickly and easily. The appropriate managers are automatically notified and can make decisions on overall staff availability before approving or rejecting the requests. Staff can also notify managers of sickness, so that resources can be reallocated to cover absentees.

"Activ Absence Control and Activ Quality Management are both web-based applications, so it's simple for our employees to log in from anywhere, even if they're working at a client's site or using someone else's PC," comments Stuart Stark. "Both solutions make life much easier for the large proportion of our employees who regularly work away from the office; as a result we get better, more detailed data and greater insight into our business processes."

A successful partnership

Stuart Stark concludes: "The combination of IBM Lotus Notes and Domino with the solutions from Codel Software gives us a much more efficient way to manage key business processes and helps reduce workload for employees in the field and at head office. The Codel team has been excellent, helping us adapt their solutions to our precise needs, and providing dedicated, responsive support to ensure the success of both projects."

About Codel Software

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