

Saint-Gobain Sekurit: A Clear-As-Glass Solution with Apriso

Globalization means ever-larger companies dealing with increasingly far-flung and diverse operations. With each new facility, standardization and quality improvement programs become more difficult. Saint-Gobain Sekurit, one of the top three glass manufacturers in the world, knows these challenges first-hand, as it recently decided to unify manufacturing and logistics across 44 of its European sites.

“We are heavily exposed to client pressure to contain costs and improve logistics excellence,” says Pascal Ober, Competence Centers Director at Saint-Gobain Sekurit. “In fact, our customers asked that we reduce prices by six percent while simultaneously delivering 10 percent improvements in productivity. This necessitated a radical change in both our ERP and supply network solutions. We currently enjoy a 44 percent market share in Europe, and 22 percent worldwide.”

More Sophisticated Products

Saint-Gobain Sekurit was especially concerned with the need to move from producing individual pieces of glass, to providing encapsulated modules with special packaging for OEMs. This meant a more rigorous pricing procedure, with product costing information available during the prototyping process. It also meant consolidating revenue and costs by project, something that had been extremely difficult before.

Saint-Gobain Sekurit selected SAP as its ERP, and integrated it with Apriso to extend efficiencies down to the shop floor. As an operations execution solution with a modular architecture, Apriso offers both a Manufacturing Execution System (MES) and a Warehouse Management System (WMS) with real-time visibility and control for manufacturing operations. The flexibility of the solution has let Saint-Gobain Sekurit decide which applications to deploy first, driven by which area of operations execution that had the most pressing need. The software integrates planning, execution and control, improving operational efficiency and production accuracy.

One Giant Leap Ahead

“We figured it was better to do one big change than two medium-sized ones. A traditional approach would split a large project into smaller elements to reduce risk. Also, some might argue that decentralized IS and IT would be too plant-specific, prohibiting efficient change,” notes Ober.

“Sekurit took the opposite tack,” he continues. “Instead, we saw implementation as a unique opportunity to bring our factory IS and IT people on board early in the game. We envisioned IT savings by avoiding the proliferation of small local projects at the plant-floor operations level in parallel with the SAP implementation. We also sought to optimize both centralized and local resources.”



Benefits Achieved

- Standardized product cost and Key Performance Indicator calculations and measurements across 44 plants throughout Europe
- Identified areas where yields are best or where time was lost
- Realized continuous improvement through replication of best practices
- Validated best practices and incorporated them within a Core profile, which was then deployed across the enterprise to every location

Apriso is functional at 44 sites in nine countries, automating all aspects of production. The system provides hard data to SAP on manufacturing processes and costs for reliable calculations of project expenses, efficiencies and profitability. It functions as an SAP module, with similar interfaces, master data, system maintenance and reporting features.

“Core” Approach to Deployment

Implementing Apriso across this many diverse sites went surprisingly quickly, thanks to its “Core” implementation approach. The Core program identified the business processes that comprised most of the necessary functionality for a typical Sekurit facility. This ‘blueprint’ of best practice processes was packaged and easily distributed to each location, treating Apriso as an enterprise solution, rather than a typical MES system for a specific plant. Once business processes were identified that achieved superior operations execution performance, these processes were ‘bundled’ as a template, to be used at each other site as part of the deployment, improving overall system performance.

“No single facility is going to be absolutely perfect,” explains Ober. “Yet each facility may have some unique way of doing things that could benefit other plants. Working with the Apriso implementation team, we identified best practices and incorporated them within a Core profile, to then deploy across the enterprise at each location. The template is flexible enough, however, that it can be easily modified to meet local conditions, as well as be updated to reflect new process improvements.”

Competitive Advantages

How have changed things at Saint-Gobain Sekurit? “We now have standardized practices throughout our European facilities. Each plant has the same Apriso version, along with SAP across the enterprise, and all subsystems have vanished,” says Ober.

“Costs are now calculated accurately and consistently at the product level. We can relate cost to specific issues for assessing productivity. For instance, we can pinpoint where scrap is generated, and where overall yield is best, making meaningful comparisons. Before, this was impossible, because plants might make calculations slightly differently, resulting in skewed numbers. More accurate figures translate into more precise bids, making us more competitive.”

Sekurit named their ERP / MES project “Avenir,” which is French for “to move forward.” After evaluating the system’s performance, the company clearly considers Avenir a move forward in the right direction, based on plans for further expansion. “We have immediate plans to extend the combined solution far beyond Europe, into India, Thailand and Mexico, providing us with a competitive advantage to leverage worldwide,” says Ober.

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