

DENSO

iGRAFAX PUTS DENSO PROCESSES ON TRACK

Quality management according to ISO 9001: Automotive supplier guides European business processes with iGrafx

The Story

Since its ISO 9001 certification in 1998, DENSO Automotive GmbH, from Eching, the German subsidiary of DENSO Corp. Japan, has been one of the main players in the German automotive supply industry. One significant contribution to this success story was the rearrangement of the process landscape using iGrafx technologies.

Heating, ventilation, air conditioning as well as non-thermal systems such as information and driver-assistance solutions, entertainment electronics, navigation and even diesel injection technologies – DENSO follows the lead of the major automotive companies. The close ties with manufacturers such as Toyota, Audi, BMW, Daimler, Fiat, Ford and Volks-wagen does, however, have a downside for suppliers such as DENSO: standards must keep up with the manufacturer's requirements and business processes must be continuously adapted to ensure prompt product development, production processes and a problem-free supply chain.

ISO 9001 certification: Process management on the test stand

This also applies to quality management. In this case it is the ISO 9001 standard in conjunction with TS 16949 which guides the automotive industry – and which therefore also drove DENSO to make changes to its IT: "When we applied for ISO 9001 certification, and then expanded it with the TS 16949 standard a few years later, the topic of process modelling was mentioned very early", remembers DENSO stalwart Albert Fendl, Senior Manager Business Process Management – Quality

Management. The ISO 9001 and/or TS 16949 standards are requirements which contribute to system and process quality, increase customer satisfaction and prevent errors and risks in the development and production process and supply chain. Says Fendl: "Suppliers in the automotive industry are required to structure and have their quality management system certified according to these rules. No ifs or buts about it."

Convincing reasons for the team around Fendl to document the processes of the German DENSO subsidiary, first in writing and later in graphical form. "The Casewise Corporate Modeler tool that we used at the time had a few flaws in its range of functions, and maintaining it was too expensive in the long term." In addition, the seven other European branches of the DENSO group, i.e. those in England, Italy or Spain, used different quality management on the basis of national documents, and these documents were not based on internationally-standardised criteria. "It was time for a new quality and process management system which was able to supply all employees and managers with relevant information and processes in a shared European database", says Fendl. One important requirement was the initial restructuring and harmonisation of the business processes themselves. DENSO tried out a total of seven process management systems in the course of a comprehensive evaluation phase – three of which eventually made it across the finish line. N5 Solutions, an in-house installation based on Lotus Notes, and iGrafx. "Our feasibility study identified a clear favourite: iGrafx" says Fendl, recalling the critical stage in March 2010.

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The Challenge

One major reason for the decision: iGrafx allowed DENSO to input and edit Visio document without any need to convert them. In addition, so-called shapes, that is to say shapes and activities within a process, were, to quote the manager, "significantly clearer than in competitor's products, meaning that significantly more information could be included." The relatively simple operations to model a workflow and the attractive initial price to create a proof of concept for the tool were also strong influencing factors. "And, finally, the very active support and individual advice sealed the deal. These allow the software to be used even more productively." iGrafx advisors worked closely with DENSO on projects to improve quality management, with the goal to reduce product downtime while accelerating project execution.

The Solution

Fendl's colleague Christian De Graeve, Corporate Functions – Business Management System – System Management, highlights another technical aspect – the repository: "A further important factor was that we were able to store all of our processes in a central database, providing us with new options for the assessment and description of business processes." The principle: all legacy systems from the seven European branches were first consolidated in iGrafx before processes could be newly modelled and harmonised, in order to finally be once again available via browsers to all branches and various departments such as Development or Sales.

De Graeve elaborates: "iGrafx's folder structure was easy to adapt to our very complex company relationships with extremely heterogeneous process landscapes and publish on the Internet." Just a few months later, the automotive supplier from Eching was able to go live with the new productivity system and has, since then, had a process management tool "which interactively displays all of our business processes, including 250 workflow diagrams and 715 integrated documents in various formats, all the way to the seventh level." These include Office files, verbal and graphical work and process descriptions, forms and tables. De Graeve is therefore also convinced by the possibility of integrating non-iGrafx documents into the process management

system and to then link them to iGrafx's own files – with great success: Around 515 employees access documents stored on the database around 7,000 times each month. Administration of the process management system takes place either centrally or non-centrally via iGrafx, depending on the location, while rights management controls access depending on database folders and membership in the corresponding User Domain Group.

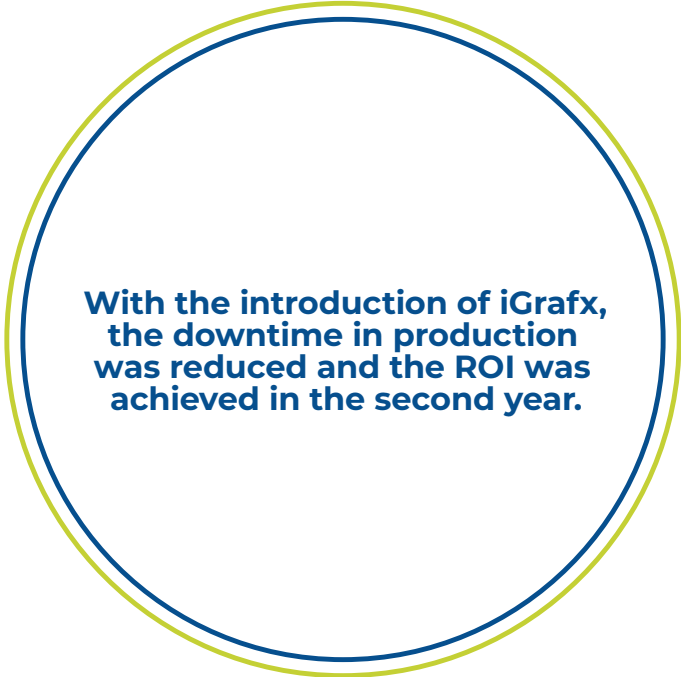
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Christian De Graeve
Corporate Functions – Business
Management System
DENSO International Europe

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The Benefits

Company heads at the Japanese parent have also been talking about improved access to processes since the implementation, although their focus has primarily been on compliance. The clear process descriptions now allow laws and regulations to be strictly implemented, as reported by Senior Manager Fendl. "Now we have corresponding process key figures for everything, see fewer deviations within the ISO-TS certification and have significantly greater process compliance." As a result, DENSO now even uses process models created in iGrafx to run in other systems under controlled conditions in order to monitor the process indicators. This makes use of iGrafx's cooperation with workflow automation software. Fendl describes a typical example of this type of business process automation: during the development of a new air conditioning compressor, over a period of 36 months, managers are now able to process individual milestones in a controlled manner and to closely document individual tests, objectives and reports and modify them if necessary: "We can see in real time in the system whether processes are complete and whether deadlines are met, escalation levels are managed and superiors are kept up to date." Fendl's conclusion: "iGrafx is a very stable tool, and has operated without interruption from the start." This has also had an effect on operational calculations: "We have already achieved our return on investment in the second year."



With the introduction of iGrafx, the downtime in production was reduced and the ROI was achieved in the second year.

iGrafx

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