

INSTRON CORPORATION CANTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Business Challenge

Improve Quality and Significantly Reduce Customer Response Times

A leader in designing and manufacturing quality measurement systems for over five decades, Instron realized it needed improve the resolution of customer problems with its products. The company was using customized quality solutions to resolve customer issues. Customers would call Instron's technical support group, who would log the incident and history into their call center application. Integration was extremely difficult between the call center application and Instron's quality management system, so high priority incidents would be manually copied for Quality and Engineering groups to manage within that system.

The quality management system was not tightly integrated with other enterprise information. As customer calls related to a specific product would begin to pile up, Instron had no efficient way of determining how customer incidents were related to specific products or product lines. As corrective actions and engineering changes were generated to resolve the customer issues, it was difficult to link the resolution status to specific incidents and customers. Customer service representatives were unable to effectively respond to customers since they had little visibility into how problems were being addressed.

To further complicate product quality management, each Instron site had its own home-grown application to track issues. Corrective actions to fix manufacturing defects were contained within each site; it was difficult to leverage resolutions from one site to another. Issues from the field were tracked differently than those from internal manufacturing locations. Engineers often had to fix problems without knowing the full scope of the issues. Future products were sometimes designed with quality flaws inherited from earlier products. According to Rick Tattersfield, Instron Vice President of Quality, "Hundreds of thousands of dollars were being wasted because we couldn't see history repeating itself until it was too late."

"Product Service & Improvement enables Instron to enhance the global approach of the company and close the loop on our quality processes. Agile is truly an enterprise-wide solution."

—Rick Tattersfield, VP Quality



- One of the world's leading manufacturers of quality measurement systems
- Products used to evaluate the mechanical and physical properties and performance of materials, structures, and components
- Global company with 5 manufacturing plants and 30 offices in 17 countries
- Complies to ISO 9001, ISO/IEC 17025, and ISO 9000-3

GOALS

- Streamline and improve quality management system
- Implement a system that could integrate easily with other enterprise solutions
- Establish a closed-loop system that could link incidents to products and corrective actions
- Easily leverage solutions from one site to another

RESULTS

- Implement an Instron-wide quality management solution tied to the product record
- Open solution easily integrates with other enterprise solutions
- Gain enterprise visibility of quality issues and improve customer response
- Achieve an effective closed-loop quality process for corrective action tracking enables cleaner installations and lower warranty costs

Solution Deployed

Agile Product Service & Improvement

Instron had been using Agile Product Collaboration to manage engineering changes for several years, so it was a natural step to consider another Agile product lifecycle management (PLM) solution to help resolve product quality issues. After evaluating several quality management systems from companies around the world, Instron selected Agile Product Service & Improvement as the best enterprise-quality solution. “Most of the solutions we looked at were good systems, but they were site-based systems, not enterprise solutions. Only Agile was able to directly tie to the product record and allow us to see how problems related to specific products,” states Cam Bickel, Manager of Engineering Services. Agile gives Instron enterprise visibility of products and issues tied to specific customers. The tight linkage to corrective actions and engineering changes creates a closed-loop quality process throughout Instron. Agile Product Service & Improvement enables Instron to aggregate, analyze, and act on customer problems. Since Agile has an open and flexible integration platform, it is easy for Instron to tie information from Agile to their other enterprise systems. And because Agile Product Collaboration had already been in place for several years, there was a short learning curve for Instron employees to use Agile Product Service & Improvement to analyze product and quality information.

Agile is an enterprise solution providing a closed loop quality process. Tattersfield and team expect the solution to address all of the company’s quality issues. He says, “Agile Product Service & Improvement enables Instron to enhance the global approach of the company and close the loop on our quality processes. Agile is truly an enterprise-wide solution.”

Benefits Realized

- Faster resolution times for customer issues, leading to greater customer loyalty and higher satisfaction
- Customer service representatives easily able to see status of problems and associated corrective actions and engineering changes resulting
- Quality analysts and engineers able to see the entire picture of how problems relate to the entire product and react faster to resolve issues
- Because quality is improved, standard costs are lowered and on-time delivery of products is raised
- Improvement in product reliability enables cleaner installations and lower warranty costs (I&W), a key metric that directly impacts the bottom line

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—Cam Bickel, Manager of Engineering Services



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