

Documents that bridge the gap

With the industry under pressure from regulators, there has been a renewed focus on document management. **Sword CTSpace**'s Tim Fleet and **SAMIR**'s Ahmed Harnouch and Hmida M'Hamdi tell *World Expro* how implementing new systems can improve compliance and help drive growth.



"It's a bit nebulous at the moment because it hasn't happened yet but the sense I get is that it's like a hurricane coming in off the Gulf and the industry is bracing itself"

Fleet compares the current situation to the aftermath of the 1988 Piper Alpha disaster in which 167 people lost their lives. In the wake

In the wake of the Piper Alpha incident, the UK government tightened up safety for the oil and gas industry in the North Sea.

Although the exact causes of the explosion that destroyed the Deepwater Horizon rig remain unknown, there is a prospect of tighter regulation and standards in the near future. The US government was quick to impose a moratorium on drilling, and the European Commission would like to take a similar step. It now seems likely that after November's mid-term elections a new Congress will seek to impose tighter regulations.

Anticipating this development, major oil and gas producers are looking for ways to gain greater control over their operations and identify potential problems. Reappraising electronic content management strategies will be critical and, while most companies already have a programme in place, the present climate means the mass of technical drawings, specifications and data that make up engineering documentation need to bear up to fresh scrutiny.

New mood

Tim Fleet, global product director at Sword CTSpace, is based just outside Houston and, during a recent series of meetings with executives in the city, noticed the change in atmosphere. "It's clear that the BP situation is influencing people's thoughts," he says. "There's a general expectation that there's going to be an increase in the level of compliance and a need for IT systems to help companies demonstrate they're meeting the requirements.

of the tragedy, the British government tightened up safety regulations for the oil and gas industry in the North Sea, creating demand for systems that would give operators more control over their documentation and a greater ability to anticipate problems and it was in this climate that Sword began developing its products.

"The spotlight is going to be shining very brightly again on the ability of companies to demonstrate that people working on these assets are using the correct versions of the information they need and that accurate records of their activities are produced," he says. "The industry is taking a look at what it's got in terms of systems and IT and making sure that it's reacting now rather than waiting for changes to take place with regards to the regulations."

Sword is working with major oil and gas companies to implement document management systems that design, construction and engineering teams can access wherever they are. Its flagship Fusion Enterprise product adds application level functionality to content management systems, enabling more streamlined handling and tracking of specialised documents. The



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Established in 1959, the company had a capacity of 2 million tons per year, which was increased to 6.2 million tons a year. It now operates on two sites and is aiming to add a further 2 million tons to its annual output by 2012. Additionally, the refineries are being adapted to produce higher volumes of low sulphur fuel and

platform is also available on a software as a service basis as Fusion Live, facilitating the rapid launch of new projects.

"Our technology in the operations and maintenance of the industry is about managing documentation that describes how people do things to an asset, recording the results of what they have done and providing documentation to describe what they're working with," Fleet explains. "Those elements are absolutely key to the operation of any facility."

Joined-up thinking

While Sword offers its own content management platform, Fusion can be integrated into systems provided by other major software companies including IBM's FileNet P8, Microsoft's SharePoint, and EMC's Documentum. Engineering documents can be handled in Fusion but organised using another ECM platform to ensure coherence across an organisation and enable consistent auditing and reporting.

"Major oil and gas companies have got infrastructure in place that is managing content across the whole of their organisation but they don't provide the application level functionality that we do for the engineering world," Fleet explains. "What we're doing is giving these folks an application that is useful for managing capital projects but allowing them to store the documentation and information into their existing structure."

The globalisation of the industry that has taken place since the 1980s means there is now an additional requirement to have unified systems for both construction projects and operations. Fusion can also be accessed from numerous locations across different organisations, enabling greater collaboration on construction activities and in the operation of assets with partner companies. When a project draws to a close, information can be shifted seamlessly from the constructor or manufacturer to the operator, with the owner retaining visibility at all times.

In April 2010 Sword completed a project with SAMIR, a Moroccan oil refining company that is undergoing expansion, which demonstrated the need for effective oversight and coordination.

"We prefer to adopt the engineering, procurement and construction management (EPCM) approach," explains Ahmed Harnouch, SAMIR's strategy director. "The handling of documentation is the responsibility of the contractor with the support of SAMIR. At the end of the project, we receive the 'as built' documentation for inclusion into the technical management system."

the company hopes to install a new bitumen blowing unit.

In order to manage the hand over process from its engineering procurement and construction contractor, SAMIR opted to implement Fusion Enterprise on top of an ongoing IBM FileNet P8 installation programme. "We believe that information technology is the best tool to control our operations," explains technical services director Hmida M'Hamdi. "Currently we are implementing an electronic document management system aimed at optimising workflows and keeping track of all our internal documentation. Fusion is now in place to manage technical and refining information."

Before the company embarked on its ECM project it had 3,800 A0 pages of plans, that would stretch for 4.5km if they were laid end-to-end, and 30,000 electronic documents stored across a range of media. Working with implementation partner CBI, SAMIR worked to bring non-technical data into the FileNet system but the additional features of Fusion were required to manage the high volumes of engineering and maintenance information.

The ability to better handle documents and integrate legacy information – some generated as far back as the founding of the company – will provide management teams with far greater oversight of their operations and open up new paths to innovation.

Fleet sees this as one of the major benefits of an effective ECM strategy. "The same tools organisations use to handle all the documentation and drawings for an asset provide tremendous benefits in terms of knowledge management," he explains. "The ability to capture data and record decisions means that when it comes to the next project, you're using information gathered from the previous one." While the industry might soon be faced with the need to demonstrate greater compliance to standards and to keep complete records of construction and maintenance activities, solutions are available to achieve this visibility without disrupting existing data management activities. In addition, implementing engineering data handling platform can also help operators make the most of their existing assets and streamline future development activities. ■

Further information

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