

How Flowlens Helped Flint Subsea Achieve ISO 9001 Accreditation Through Digital Transformation

Flint Subsea is a supplier of Emergency Quick Disconnect systems for the offshore oil and gas industry. Flowlens is an MRP system designed to help companies along their digital transformation paths while also helping them set up systems and processes to follow accredited quality management systems like ISO 9001. This case study will describe how Flowlens helped Flint Subsea simultaneously achieve ISO 9001 compliance and implement a robust digital transformation strategy.

The challenges faced at Flint Subsea

When clients began requesting that Flint Subsea be ISO 9001 accredited, Gareth Black, the company's technical director, realized they were right; it was time to begin building a quality management system (QMS) that would follow ISO 9001 requirements. Up until this point, the company, as he put it, ***“had an ad hoc system of spreadsheets, word documents and emails that we were using to control our business.”***

While this system was able to manage day-to-day activities, it was not efficient either in terms of material requirements planning (MRP) or as a QMS because it did not allow for the traceability and transparency that ISO 9001 demands. Gareth Black understood that this was a prime opportunity to implement a new MRP system instead of simply smoothing over the existing system. A fresh start was needed. As Gareth describes, ***“We decided that we had to implement a full manufacturing system.”***

Deciding on an MRP system

Choosing a new MRP system is always a difficult process. Making the wrong decision upfront can waste time and money as flaws in an MRP system may only materialise months after it was first implemented.

For Flint Subsea ***““We knew we needed a piece of software or a tool that provided end-to-end control of our manufacturing and sales process. We would have carried on as we were with little control over what we were doing. We would have lost records, we would not be able to meet the demand of our clients, and our lead times would have continued to be 30-plus weeks.”***

The company laid out a few key requirements to help them select the right one. First and foremost, it had to demonstrate control of the manufacturing, purchasing and sales processes key to achieving ISO accreditation.

More specifically, Gareth Black was looking for a system that helped with the creation, issuing and monitoring of job cards, as well as control stock levels and bills of materials within the job cards. In addition to this, it was important that the commercial side of the business also be optimised, meaning the new software needed to improve sales orders, dispatch notes, and commercial invoicing integrated with QuickBooks online accounting software.

Once the requirements were clearly understood, the next step was to look for a system that could at the very least meet the company's baseline requirements. Ultimately, Gareth Black chose Flowlens as the cloud MRP system for Flint Subsea. The reasons for this decision were as follows:

- Flowlens came as a recommendation from another specialist engineering and manufacturing business owner. The other company's successful experience suggested Flowlens carried less risk of becoming inefficient than other such products.
- The Sandbox feature provided by Flowlens made it easy to trial using the system with no risk to day-to-day operations.
- Flowlens compared favourably in terms of cost, especially when considering the depth of functionality on offer handling not just MRP, inventory and jobs, but also front end sales pipeline and seamless integration with QuickBooks online accounts software.

Implementing the change

When it comes to implementing a new cloud MRP system from the ground up, the implementation process must be as quick and efficient as possible. This is where Flowlens excels. One of the more innovative methods to streamline the on-boarding process is to give customers access to a "sandbox" mode which allows them to experiment with the system without affecting actual day-to-day business operations. In addition to this, Flowlens UK and Ireland based support staff are there every step along the path towards implementation. As Gareth describes, "we were guided through it and given a step-by-step training/introduction to Flowlens." and "Support is available really quickly."

Benefits of going digital

Flint Subsea was able to use Flowlens to achieve ISO 9001 requirements and also undergo a digital transformation within the business. Gareth comments "We've reduced our lead time from 30 weeks to 7.5 weeks and we can easily demonstrate to auditors that we are keeping the records we should be keeping. This has now enabled us to secure several large and lucrative contracts that would have been impossible without this system."

Over and above these successes, Flint Subsea was able to extract the following additional benefits:

- **Useability** - If an MRP system is too complex, there is a good chance that employees won't all use it effectively. The ease of use was one of the key factors that made Flint Subsea's digital transformation possible.
- **Reduced lead time** - Many factors go into securing new contracts, but one of the most critical is lead time. Clients are in some cases willing to spend more just to get an item in as quickly as possible. Flowlens helped dramatically reduce Flint Subsea's lead time.
- **Improved supplier monitoring** - If a supplier does not perform they can lose their status as an approved partner. That information will stay in the system and can be flagged in future. Expected delivery times can be logged and monitored within Flowlens so that any late deliveries and related trends are highlighted.
- **Speed of accreditation** - When an audit approaches, there is no need to rush and generate records that should have already been created. Flowlens keeps everything saved in one location so that, come audit time, it's a simple matter to prove that the company is following ISO requirements.
- **Integration with accounting software** - The Flowlens cloud MRP system works well alongside existing accounting packages, in this case QuickBooks online. It liberates each piece of software to operate in the way it was intended rather than pulling double duty.

In Summary

Flowlens aligns well with any QMS system as it can be configured to suit a company's specific process flow while organizing all the information and data generated during normal business operations. This traceability and transparency make the audit process routine; everything can be shown to the auditor over the span of a few hours instead of multiple days.

In summary Flowlens has had a demonstrable and transformative effect on how Flint Subsea operates, helping the business secure new tier-1 contracts with global players.