DD Scientific: Breathing Easier Thanks to Flowlens

In the bustling world of manufacturing, where precision and timely delivery are paramount, DD Scientific stands out. They're the folks behind the electric chemical gas sensors that keep people safe across the globe – from industrial sites to hospitals and even our homes. As Sales Director Rob White puts it, "every device that we manufacture could potentially save someone's life."

But with great responsibility comes great complexity, especially when a company experiences the kind of impressive growth DD Scientific has seen – a whopping 30% year-on-year for the past three years. This rapid expansion highlighted the limitations of their legacy system, creating headaches around visibility of crucial elements like stock, **production planning**, and sales order forecasting.

The Pain Points: When Growth Outpaces Your Systems
Before Flowlens, life at DD Scientific wasn't always smooth sailing. The lack of a unified system meant information was siloed, leading to inefficiencies and potential pitfalls.

- **Visibility Issues:** "As our business has grown, we found it difficult to have visibility using our legacy system to get visibility of key things like stock, like production planning, sales order forecasting," explains Rob. This lack of a clear overview made proactive decision-making a challenge.
- **Production Scheduling Woes:** Without accurate production planning, the risk of missing orders loomed large. "If we don't get our production scheduling right, then we miss orders and that leads to dissatisfied customers," Rob points out.
- **Stock Management Struggles:** Managing inventory was a delicate balancing act, often leading to either shortages or excess stock. "If we haven't got our stock right... occasionally, we would not have enough parts to manufacture products on time, or in some cases we'd have too much and therefore working capital was affected," Rob recalls.
- **Time-Consuming Data Retrieval:** For Rob, getting a handle on key sales data was a laborious process. "For me to get that information on the previous system required several steps and, you know, several tens of minutes to do."
- **Complex and Error-Prone Systems:** Operations Director Alan Rex remembers their old system as "quite complex. There was plenty of room for error. So they were almost scared to use it." This complexity also created barriers during training.

- **Disjointed Information for Audits:** When customers requested quality audits, pulling together all the necessary information from various systems was a significant undertaking. "It could be quite difficult to pull all the information together," Alan notes.

The Flowlens Fix: Bringing Clarity and Efficiency
Recognizing these challenges, DD Scientific embarked on a mission to find a system that could streamline their operations and provide the much-needed visibility. They landed on Flowlens, and the impact has been significant.

- **Enhanced Visibility Across the Board:** Flowlens provided a clear and simple interface that everyone could understand. "Flowlens is a very clear system, it's very simple to use," says Alan. The customizable dashboard, displayed on a large screen on the shop floor, keeps the entire team in the loop, facilitating real-time shopfloor data capture. "Everybody is up-to-date and aware of what's going on in terms of the planning for the job cards, sales orders that are shipping out," Alan explains.
- **Streamlined Production Planning:** The production planning process has seen a dramatic improvement. "We can almost do a month's planning in a day, whereas it used to take maybe two or three days," Alan highlights. This represents a **50-67% reduction in** planning time.
- **Empowered Production Team:** Production Supervisor Georgi emphasizes how Flowlens saves her time daily, contributing to efficient shopfloor work instructions & data capture. "Having all the information there, it saves me around one hour per day." This efficiency gain allows her and her team to focus on producing high-quality sensors. The system provides instant access to drawings, material details, and even their location, eliminating time wasted searching and improving the accuracy of shopfloor data capture.
- **Centralized Information for Quality and Traceability:** Flowlens is becoming the central hub for all crucial information, supporting comprehensive shopfloor data capture. "We're trying to use Flowlens as a more centralised system where the job cards that we raise will have all the information attached to it," Alan states. This makes retrieving documents for audits much easier and ensures all necessary certifications and build instructions are readily available, linked directly to shopfloor data capture records.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making for Sales:** For Sales Director Rob, the dashboard feature has been a game-changer. "It probably saves me half a day a week in terms of the amount of time that I used to have to spend getting that data ready." This freed-up time allows him to focus on business development, directly contributing to growth. "The biggest advantage is that it frees up my time. So if I'm not spending hours a week analysing data, and I'm spending that time following up on inquiries or phoning potential customers up, you know, that's feeding into the growth of the business," Rob emphasizes.
- **Improved Stock Management:** Flowlens provides clear insights into stock levels and usage, informed by accurate shopfloor data capture. "The stock forecast graphs have helped us with our planning too, it's a clear indication of when we need materials versus the job card outputs," Alan explains. This has enabled them to "keep less stock" and prevent overstocking.

- **Enhanced Communication:** The tasks feature in Flowlens has streamlined internal communication, supporting efficient shopfloor data capture and issue resolution. "For communication, I think is very good. It's improving communication," says Georgi. She can easily communicate material needs or other issues directly through the system, saving time and ensuring clarity, directly impacting the accuracy of shopfloor data capture related to production progress.
- **Better Delivery Reliability:** With improved production planning and material forecasting, informed by real-time shopfloor data capture, DD Scientific can now be more confident in meeting their delivery promises. "The impact is that when we promise a delivery, we, you know, we actually make that, make that date," Alan confirms.

Unexpected Benefits and Future Vision

Beyond the initial goals, DD Scientific has discovered unexpected advantages with Flowlens. The integration of the RMA (Returned Materials Authorisation) process, previously managed with Excel, is one such example. "Now we can, you know, with a click, we can see what products have been returned by whom, uh, we can see what percentage of those products were faulty," Rob explains. This provides valuable data for quality improvement initiatives.

Their vision is clear: "to have all of our processes driven through one system Flowlens," as Rob states. This ambition to centralize all operations within Flowlens, including comprehensive production planning and seamless shopfloor data capture, will undoubtedly lead to further efficiencies and better control across the business.

Key Takeaways for Others

Reflecting on their journey, Rob offers valuable advice for companies considering a similar transition. "I would advise them to look very carefully at the data that they have around them and the data that they will require to have into in Flowlens," he stresses, highlighting the importance of data preparation. He also emphasizes the need for comprehensive training to ensure effective use of features like production planning and shopfloor work instructions & data capture.

For DD Scientific, the move to Flowlens wasn't just about implementing a new system; it was about transforming their operations, empowering their team with better tools for production planning and shopfloor data capture, and ultimately, better serving their customers who rely on their life-saving technology. As Georgi simply puts it, "If I didn't have Flowlens tomorrow, it will be total chaos because nothing will be as organised as it is now and I wouldn't know where to start." **That says it all.**

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