

Cellu Tissue Manages Consistent Quality

Cellu Tissue is a company on the move. In just over ten years they have expanded from a single paper manufacturing facility to a corporation that oversees six different plants.

Cellu Tissue was founded in 1984 when a group of private investors purchased a two-paper machine facility in East Hartford, Connecticut. After an ownership change in 1992, the company acquired Coastal Papers in Mississippi, effectively tripling their production capabilities.

In 1998, Charterhouse Group International, Inc. (a New York-based private equity firm) became principal owner. Since then, four independent paper companies were added to the family, located in Michigan, New York, Ontario and Wisconsin.



Robin Gaumes overseas quality at Cellu Tissue's head office in East Hartford, Connecticut

Each plant was acquired through acquisition, which meant all had their own ways of collecting data, their own quality standards, and different ways of reporting. Each plant produced slightly different products within the broad category of tissue paper and machine glazed papers.

“One of our challenges has been to standardize data collection and reporting”, says Robin Gaumes. “Each of our facilities has unique work environments with their own particular advantages. However, we wanted to set a consistent corporate standard that our clients could come to rely on. We wanted a standard that would equate the name Cellu Tissue with quality.”

The company looked for a solution that would create common rules and standards, but with enough flexibility to build upon the different traditions of each plant. They found a solution for data collecting, quality control and reporting all rolled up into one software application: Quality Window.

The company first installed Quality Window to track and analyse production data. Because Cellu Tissue's paper-based products are used to make medical and sanitary products such as baby diapers, surgical waddings, and feminine protection pads, tolerance for production variations was very low. Company technicians were able to use the intuitive tools in Quality Window to discover problems in the paper-making process and ultimately minimize variations.

As the company gathered more data and analyzed it, it became much better at making a consistent product. It was then able to fine tune its process and ensure product quality met the target standards.

The company's next step was to document these successes on a batch by batch basis. Quality Window again supplied the tool with its ability to deliver custom reports.

The company designed a Certificate of Analysis (CoA) that the supervisor could print out at the completion of the production run. The CoA summarizes real-time production data and compares it to target specifications. The report is then printed out and shipped with the product.



“We customize each Certificate with the client’s name and purchase order, and the Certificate is examined by our supervisor before the product ships”, notes Mr. Gaumes. “When the Client receives our product, the first thing they look for is the CoA. They can tell at a glance that the shipment meets or exceeds their specifications. It eliminates any possibility that inferior product would ever be shipped.”

The company has since implemented Quality Window at all of its six plants. Each plant is different, making different product with different target specifications. Yet Quality Window has the flexibility to manage a variety of production environments, yet maintain corporate standards. The CoA produced at each plant is remarkably similar, and is branded with Cellu Tissue name and logo. This standardization is all the more important as the company expands into Latin America and other foreign markets.

Internally, Quality Window is also helping to integrate the six diverse manufacturing operations into one corporation. Senior company officials can compare data from each plant using one software program. Plant managers can share data. Ideas for improvement successfully implemented at one facility are now easier to introduce to the others.

“Quality Window has helped us become better at what we do best – make sanitary tissues and tissue base stocks of the highest quality”, says Mr. Gaumes. “We may have six different plants, but the philosophy is the same – nothing but the best”.

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