intellect

MICROBAC: CRAFTING CREATIVITY WITH INTELLECT'S ADAPTIVE APPS

THE COMPANY

Microbac Laboratories is the largest family-owned, privately held third-party testing company in the US, with over 600 employees in thirty locations across fourteen states. The company's portfolio of services includes a broad range of testing and analytics for the environmental, food, and life science markets.

The company prides itself in its high-touch approach to service excellence, bringing world-class expertise and keen attention to the unique market requirements of each client. The company's experts offer a level of authenticity, integrity, urgency and excellence that few other organizations can match.

Microbac participates in an array of third-party quality assessments such as NELAC (TNI), ISO 17025, and GxP. As a result, they are routinely audited to validate their compliance with stringent quality standards. The company has been rated by the American Council of Independent Laboratories (ACIL) among the top five laboratories nationwide for quality, responsiveness, and service excellence.

THE PROBLEM

Like many organizations, Microbac was managing their QMS processes using a combination of general-purpose tools like Microsoft Excel, Access, and Sharepoint, KnowledgeTree for document management, and Smartsheets. In addition, they used several different homegrown systems for managing nonconformances. QMS documents and data were distributed across different systems at various locations, with little standardization and no mechanism to enforce a common set of business rules.

None of Microbac's systems included built-in notification capabilities or workflows. Many of the company's business processes required manual intervention, and most were dependent on a highly attentive staff to ensure that nothing fell through the cracks. Microbac's training content was not easily accessible, and many of their processes relied on institutional knowledge. Whenever a staff member left the organization, that information walked out the door with them.

Microbac's custom systems for nonconformance management presented an even greater challenge. With the gradual turnover of IT personnel, the company lost its ability to manage and maintain those applications.
Ashley Malchow, Microbac's Senior Vice President for Quality and Safety, recognized that the company needed to update its QMS technology. She approached the senior executive team to make the case for change, bringing a dollars-and-cents approach to her pitch. Microbac works hard to foster a quality-oriented culture, so internal conversations often revolve around the contrast between the cost of quality and the risks and costs of poor quality.

Applying that financial perspective, Malchow articulated the need for a unified system to consolidate and standardize the various QMS processes throughout the organization, with automated workflows and notifications, improved access to information, and productivity enhancements. The C-suite team gave her the green light to move forward with the project.

THE SOLUTION

Malchow and her project team began looking for a cloud-based QMS solution that was easily accessible from any of the company's thirty locations, with managed security and automated backups. Naturally, they wanted a solution that was functionally robust, including CAPA, document management, employee training, audit management, safety management, equipment maintenance records, and more. Of the solutions that made their short list, Intellect was the only product that checked every box.

What really sold them on Intellect QMS, though, was the platform's extreme configurability. While every other QMS product came with inherent limitations, Intellect's solution could be tailored to address Microbac's unique business requirements. Instead of adapting their processes to the software, Malchow wanted software that could adapt their her organization's unique needs.

Malchow and the project team also like the modern look and feel of Intellect QMS. "We wanted a positive experience for our employees who use the system every day," she noted. "Intellect was more aesthetically pleasing and tech-forward." Finally, the Microbac team recognized that Intellect's hands-on Enterprise Support, which included a dedicated analyst, would be critical to the success of the project.

When the time came to roll out the new system, the Microbac team focused their initial efforts on Document Management and Employee Training. They modified Intellect's out-of-the-box functionality by adding new fields and renaming existing fields to conform to existing terminology.

They recognized substantial benefits to the collaboration features in Intellect's Document Management module, but wanted to add a check-in/check-out capability like that which they had used in the past. The team was able to make that happen using Intellect's configuration options. They also implemented a parent-child relationship between corporate-level document templates and state-specific documents for each lab, saving time and increasing accuracy. Ashley Malchow points out that her core team is composed of quality management experts, none of whom had significant experience in IT. "That has allowed our quality management processes to really be rooted in our decision processes. Intellect's system is friendly enough to allow a non-IT person to build it the way we need it."

After rolling out Document Management and Employee Training, the Microbac team took further advantage of Intellect's extreme configurability, implementing similar changes in CAPA, Supplier Management, and Audit Management. They were able to easily replicate some of the popular features of their legacy homegrown systems, tailoring the new QMS system to their needs.

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With the successful completion of their QMS implementation, the Quality Management team at Microbac decided to take things to an even higher level, building several custom apps in Intellect. First, they created an Auditor Portal application to simplify and streamline access to QMS information during routine compliance audits. They also added a User Management application aimed at smoothly transitioning open tasks to an alternate person whenever an employee leaves the company.

THE RESULTS

Microbac is a heavily audited company, and one of the greatest benefits of the new software has been the dramatic improvement in audit efficiency. Instead of chasing down paper documents or stray files located on an individual user's hard drive, quality management personnel have immediate access to everything they need in a central location. The new software has also dramatically reduced the need for auditors to take materials off-site for review.

Staff response to the Intellect QMS platform has been universally positive. They especially appreciate having all the information they need within a single, user-friendly system. Employee training is faster, easier, and more accessible, with automated reminders and links directly to relevant content. External stakeholder feedback is extremely positive as well. One particular customer audit had been scheduled to cover two entire days, but because Intellect provided such fast and easy access to information, the audit lasted only two hours, with no findings. ISO audits have been reduced by a half-day on average, leading to substantial cost savings for the company.

Microbac's investment in Intellect has paid substantial dividends. At the conclusion of the initial rollout, Malchow's report to the CFO highlighted multiple benefits, including greater transparency, increased automation and employee productivity, improved audit efficiency, and stronger accountability.

As Ashley Malchow and her team look to the future, they see even greater possibilities. They are currently implementing two more custom apps, with another five on the drawing board. The team is evaluating Intellect's EHS modules, and looks forward to leveraging the platform's new AI features. "Intellect is the first vendor we have seen to implement AI, and we can certainly see some advantages in providing these new features to our employees," Malchow commented.

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If you'd like to learn more about Intellect QMS No-Code Compliance Platform, simply click on the Demo Request button below.

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