PACTROL CONTROLS

Pactrol Controls Ltd (part of the Emerson Group), based in Wigan in Lancashire, have been using Singlepoint for 10 years. They make controls for gas, electric and water heating systems, as well as weather watchers, but manufacturing moved to an EMS site in Hungary a couple of years ago and they have adapted their use of Singlepoint to meet these changes. There are 15 users of Singlepoint in the UK with a further 5 in Hungary and without the modules that have been developed, there would still be very long and involved manual processes for various approvals. The main generic Singlepoint modules in use by Pactrol are Document Control, Issue Management and Engineering Change. However, they have also had numerous other modules created for them and have also developed their own after some training by Syncronology.

We caught up with Dave Beeston, Product Compliance Manager for Pactrol who has been using Singlepoint from the beginning.

"For a number of years now we have been using a tailor-made module written by Syncronology for production concessions notes and permits, which is used by the UK and Hungary sites. However, we were using a manual paper-based system for component approvals as there weren't that many, but when manufacturing moved completely from the UK to Hungary, we also decided to have a Component Approval module written for us by Syncronology. Our previous system had involved a form being completed, datasheets printed out and attached, then walked around for approval. This wasn't practical when we needed to send the information to Hungary as it was time-consuming and expensive. Now, we raise an approval, attach the datasheets, sent this on an approval route and then publish it straight into the document control system. The great thing about this is, not only is it a simple workflow to navigate, our users in Hungary are also the same users of the 'Production Concession Notes and Approvals' workflow, so they were already familiar with Singlepoint".

Dave has also had training on writing workflows and over the years he has been able to adapt the workflows previously written by Syncronology as well as write his own:

"Through training by Syncronology, I was able to modify the existing Permit workflow and have also made some changes to forms etc as user requests have come through. Without the training, we would have had to approach Syncronology for every change. Syncronology's Technical Manager, Andy Greenhalgh, created an Engineering Change module as our training aid and I have been able to 'clone' this workflow to create my own. If ever I get stuck, however, Syncronology have always been there to help me".

Visual Navigator is also an area that Dave would like to develop further, either by himself or with Syncronology's help. He is also looking at implementing another new module soon for holiday approvals. However, Dave is going to hand this job over to Syncronology!

We have been delighted to work with Dave and Pactrol over the years and even more delighted that Singlepoint is being constantly reviewed, with more and more manual processes moving to an electronic process, meaning greater efficiency for Dave and the team.

You can also read this previous interview with Barry Faulkner (former Development Manager for Pactrol), who spoke to us about the Production Concessions Notes and Permits back in 2013. At the time, the production site was in Slovakia but this moved to Hungary in 2014. Barry was interviewed by Syncronology's Managing Director and co-founder, Andrew Holland:

Andrew: What first attracted you to Singlepoint?

Barry: The main attraction was the breadth of the suite available from Document Control through to Program Management. We already knew of Syncronology, and Singlepoint appealed to us because it is web-based; we knew that we would want suppliers and customers to be able to access Singlepoint in the future.

Andrew: When you first looked into Singlepoint, what did you choose as your first process and why?

Barry: We needed to automate our production concession notes and permits. Our production site is in Slovakia and they sometimes have to build under permit with non-conforming components or non-conforming methodology. Also, if a product has already been built and a problem is found (the timing is out for example), then a concession has to be asked for to release it.

Andrew: Talk me through how your process used to work when it was a manual process.

Barry: A concession note or a permit would be hand-written and then had to be walked around the various departments to be signed off. This proved to be a real chore and seemed the ideal candidate as a first process with Singlepoint.

Andrew: And how does the process work in Singlepoint?

Barry: We raise a permit or concession note request. This then gets sent to the Technical department for review and approval. Sometimes permission is required from a customer (for example, if Pactrol have to deviate from the approved vendor list for components) and the workflow allows for this. If the Technical department approves it, it then goes to the Management team (3 departments) to add comments. Finally, it is sent to the Drawing Office to be signed off and actioned.

Andrew: So what are the advantages of using Singlepoint for this process?

Barry: With the manual process, if further information was required it could be annoying having to go back to a department for this whereas when using Singlepoint, any additional information MUST be obtained before the concession or permit can be submitted. Also, a lot of time was wasted before wandering from office to office to get signatures. This caused a problem if, for example, the person required wasn't in his office and the permit had to be left on his desk with a note. If that then got lost, a second permit would have to be written and sent out for approval all over again. Although individually each document might only take 10 minutes of my time walking back and forth, over a month that is quite a saving.

Andrew: So what are your other plans with regard to using Singlepoint?

Barry: We are starting to use Document Control for development documents; prior to this they were in a manual system. We also have production documents which we will be migrating to Singlepoint in the near future so that they will all be together.

The second project we are looking at is Engineering Change. We are already part-way through the process of having this workflow designed by the Syncronology team. Whilst similar to the permit and concession process, it is more involved and will include customers, 3rd party approvals and suppliers.

Once that is up and running, we'll be looking at developing further workflows ourselves. We are currently in the process of being trained to write a workflow and we will be using that as a template to develop and implement our own workflows.