

Ecolab

PCA Streamlines Ecolab's Global Product Labeling System — Big Cost Savings, Improved Consistency and Availability



ESSENTIALS

Challenges

- Rapidly Growing SKUs, with Regional Complexities
- Increasing Internal Costs
- Frequent Errors and Delays
- Inefficient, Expensive Labor-Intensive Process
- Declining Visibility Into Product SKU Universe

Solution

- Replace 52 Separate MS Access databases with a Single, Centralized System
- Leverage Existing I/T Assets and Investments

Key Benefits

- Improved Labeling Efficiency and Consistency
- Lower Costs
- Faster Time to Market For Updates

ECOLAB BUSINESS NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Ecolab maintains thousands of different products SKUs — each with regional-specific language, product coding, pricing and compliance requirements, so staying atop ever-changing product labeling needs was no small task. Their current system involved distributing a separate MS Access database to each of their 52 global regions, periodically receive updates from each region, aggregate and update all 52 sets of data into a “Master,” redistribute updates, then start the process all over again. It was like Ground Hog day.

The process was cumbersome, tedious, and required 2 full-time people and a part-time MS Access developer to administer. Any error in the updated label data set would be propagated 52 times around the globe, and was very painful. Ground Hog day meets Whack-a-Mole.

Adding to the complexity, new product SKUs were continually flowing into (and out of) the various global markets. The company's product list was expanding rapidly — from 6,000 to over 12,000 separate product SKUs — to satisfy a variety of country-specific product size, code, and label variations.

Despite the use of sophisticated systems such as SAP and MapX, the situation had grown so cumbersome and complex to manage centrally, the various country managers had adopted their own Excel spreadsheets to track and manage local product labeling variables.

Everyone in the organization was suffering, so Ecolab embarked on an important business initiative to improve consistency and availability of product labeling data, and attempt to get increasing costs, complexities and errors under control.

“Even for a large organization like us, the structure was far too complex. From initial planning through project completion, our communications with PCA was extremely clear. They provided us with top-notch software engineers who also understood our business needs, and delivered a solution that far surpassed commercially available products. We are extremely pleased with PCA and our results.

We now have a single view of our products in the marketplace, and have realized dramatic reductions in time, resources, and cost. The new system provides everyone in the organization with a unified view of the entire product list, while enabling the company to maintain consistency and compliance with strict, ever-changing labeling requirements.”

Daniël Van Eeckhoutte, Ecolab
Business Portfolio Manager and
Six Sigma Black Belt

ECOLAB ASSESSMENT

The cost and complexity associated with managing 50+ separate distributed copies of MS Access (one for each country), and aggregating updates and reporting purposes was enormous. The Access solution was non-sustainable from both functional and cost perspectives. Commercial software that Ecolab evaluated was too costly, or unable to handle myriad language and local configuration requirements. It quickly became clear that a custom built solution was the only viable option to meet Ecolab’s unique product labeling functionality needs.

THE PCA SOLUTION

PCA evaluated Ecolab’s situation, and recommended a simple, fast and low-cost solution — migrate the MS Access datastore to SQL Server, and provide regional managers with Internet access to a single MS Access system via Citrix. This approach would preserve Ecolab’s 3-year investment in MS Access, could be completed in several months, and would cost a fraction vs. “re-platforming” the entire system.

Nine weeks later, a single Ecolab database supported all product labeling needs around the globe. The new system easily handled the 60,000+ records, and provided a secure, stable environment for managing and storing standardized product data – including country-specific sizes, formulations, and manufacturing origin information for maintaining compliance. The application and data aggregation/distribution nightmare went away, freeing up two F/T employees.

Key capabilities included centralized management of all European product codes and labels, user-provisioning and role-based access (read/write) for over 400 distributed Ecolab users in R&D, manufacturing, marketing, production, sales, and administration, and 24x7 secure, Internet access. Key benefits to Ecolab included:

- Substantial cost savings vs. commercially available software
- Best practice standardization of product listings, codes, and labels to meet country and system- specific requirements
- Improved compliance auditing capabilities
- Operational cost savings of 2 FTE/year