

Migration to a new platform delivers benefits

Global pharmaceutical company Pfizer has a site at Sandwich in Kent which is its European research and development headquarters, currently employing some 3,500 people. Pfizer's Sandwich laboratories have an excellent track record of discovering medicines that improve world health and some of Pfizer's most important medicines, treating diseases such as HIV and cardiovascular disease, were discovered here.

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At the Sandwich site there was a need to migrate to a new base platform while retaining the existing application software. This application, which involved Wonderware, focuses on the Kilo Laboratory and the Pilot Plant areas of Pfizer's Sandwich site. The former produces small (i.e. 1 kilo) quantities of substances for compound development, while the latter produces larger, yet still small, quantities of packaged products for clinical trials.

Key challenges

The core issue concerns a migration from a system based around Wonderware's InTouch v7.1 to Wonderware InTouch v9.5. The existing Pilot Plant Control System (PCS) operated reliably but much of the system's software platform was based on software that had been superseded by newer versions. While this was

not an immediate problem, it would have eventually restricted further development of the PCS. Further, it was becoming increasingly difficult to obtain PC hardware that supported the existing Windows NT4 operating system used by the PCS.

In sum, the challenges were to update software and hardware, migration to a new platform, achieve cost savings (using Terminal Services), open connectivity (future proofing), and reduced maintenance. The nub was running two systems in parallel to allow a gradual transfer to the new system while maintaining plant operation.

The solution

The integrator, In Total Control (UK) Ltd, originally lead the technical design and implementation of the control systems for both the Pilot Plant and Kilo Lab. Since completing the main project, the company continued to provide support, and implemented numerous system enhancements. The company also developed a Plant Performance Metrics database to provide management information to plant managers and supervisors.

“When we started the migration, we took the existing InTouch 7.1 application and loaded it into InTouch 9.5. Our tag server application was 100% compatible,” says Dave Kaplan, Technical Director, In Total Control (UK) Ltd. “We had already been advised of new alarm objects for the application by Wonderware, which gives us great confidence that the migrated system will continue to be supported well into the future. The backwards compatibility of Wonderware is superb.”

Benefits accruing

The key to the success of the migration



production at Pfizer



Pfizer HMI

exercise was also the running of two systems simultaneously, something enabled by the 'NetAck' software from Wonderware United Kingdom, a trading name of Solutions PT. NetAck allowed the synchronisation of alarm acknowledgement between the two systems allowing operators on either system to see the same alarm statuses. There was no disruption to the 24x7 production process during installation – and the existing application migrated to the new platform reducing the need for lengthy validation and operator training exercises.

The other core benefit accruing to Pfizer derived from the use of Terminal Services, which reduced the number of Wonderware licenses required from 45 Standard In Touch licenses to 15 Terminal Services concurrent users' licenses. Terminal Services is a technology enabling platforms with no Wonderware software installed to connect to a server which will run InTouch on its behalf in a 'session'. The resulting graphic from the session can be displayed giving the user a full InTouch experience with no software installed locally.

License utilisation was improved using scripting to manage load sharing on the servers. The scripting ensures connections are given even distribution and terminated automatically when not in use, allowing an operator to easily roam around the plant and log in wherever necessary. Using the concurrent licensing model meant any 15 machines could be used at any one time, and idle machines did not use a license.

What Pfizer wanted to accomplish was a seamless migration to a new platform, with updated software and hardware products backed by comprehensive support. Use of Wonderware InTouch for Terminal Services means it now takes just 30 minutes to build a new client. Further, the Terminal Services architecture has greatly reduced the engineering time needed to implement changes to the system as only the server machine requires updating.

The backward compatibility of the Wonderware software also avoided the need for a complete plant shut down, with a positive impact on plant disruption and overall project timescales.

Future plans

The company's plans include expanding the Historian capability to manage 10 years of data and make it available company-wide, and also upgrading to Wonderware InTouch v10. Future prospects are looking very healthy indeed.

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Pfizer

Wonderware UK wishes to thank the following companies for their valued contribution to this success story...

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