AKZONOBEL IS A GLOBAL PAINT AND COATINGS BRAND THAT HAS BEEN 'BRINGING SURFACES TO LIFE' FOR OVER 200 YEARS.

Today, AkzoNobel is known for delivering high-quality paint solutions for a range of diverse sectors, from the aerospace and automotive industries through to household decoration, bringing color and imagination into homes across the globe. Headquartered in Amsterdam, AkzoNobel is active in 150+ countries worldwide and has an international workforce of over 32,000.

In an increasingly competitive market, AkzoNobel aims to become a global industry that champions sustainable paints and coatings. To achieve this, the company identified a need to overhaul their global data governance strategy. With diverse business units located across the globe, the need for centralized management and maintenance of both technical and customer-facing data was key to ensuring AkzoNobel's processes could support its growth ambitions within an uncertain world.

Ramon Delgado is AkzoNobel's Process Manager Technical Data. Based in the Netherlands, Ramon has been with the company for over seven years currently oversees AkzoNobel's data governance transformation - a significant challenge for an established multinational brand. Here, Ramon reflects how AkzoNobel has collaborated with inriver and CTAC to power this transformation.

Akzonobel's sustainability aim:

People Planet Paint:
- 50% less carbon emission by 2030
- Zero waste by 2030
- 100% renewable energy by 2030 etc.

Challenge

As a result of its development and the scale of its operations, AkzoNobel had "no centralized governance in place regarding either the internal technical data or the output for technical customer-facing data," explains Ramon. This absence of informational governance understandably caused issues – most acutely when it came to providing accurate, customer-facing technical data.

This was partly caused by the company's business units (BUs) largely working in silos when it came to data governance, employing localized domains and systems that were often maintained manually. "Some units had mature approaches to data collection and usage," he notes. "Others were still working with Excel documents and written notes."

The challenge for AkzoNobel, therefore, was substantial yet clear. The creation of a closed system of data flow that delivered a single source of accurate, reliable information throughout all internal and external-facing operations.

However, the right solution for AkzoNobel would need to overcome two sizeable hurdles.

Firstly, with so many existing data management practices, it was imperative a solution that could communicate and integrate with these many different domains and systems in use to ensure a seamless navigation to that single source of truth.

Secondly, with operations spread across several diverse and distinct markets, any solution would have to provide localization capabilities to meet the requirements of the various BUs. Ensuring this would also aid internal buy-in of the migration of a new data model.

"We needed a comprehensive solution that can anticipate different local requirements while also fulfilling the needs of the business on a higher, global level," explains Ramon.

Solution

With their aims in place, AkzoNobel set about finding the right solution for their ambitions. As Ramon explains, internal stakeholder discussions included business engagement managers and enterprise architects.

Why a pim?

"As a global company, we knew that having a comprehensive yet flexible PIM in place was essential to ensure communication between all our various source systems," says Ramon. "inriver's PIM solution was identified as the best way for us to do this."

But technology alone is only one part of the transformation AkzoNobel sought. Another crucial aspect was identifying an implementation partner that could be there at every step of the journey. In Ctac, AkzoNobel found that partner. As inriver's largest partner in the Netherlands, Ctac has extensive experience in building out exactly the type of global solution AkzoNobel required.

The relationship has been fruitful.

"We are in constant communication with Ctac," says Ramon. "They are our first point of contact; the ones who help us define our capabilities. If we have requirements, we discuss it with them and inriver to find out if they can develop it into our solution."

"They definitely champion this PIM solution, and their close working relationship with inriver means that, even if they aren't sure of an answer directly, they are well-placed to work alongside inriver to find a solution that works for us."

> "The biggest win, though, is that our people now know there is a reliable point for all our technical data, both for internal systems and customer-facing marketplaces. That's the biggest change. We now have one single source of truth."
>
> **RAMON DELGADO**
> **PROCESS MANAGER TECHNICAL DATA**

Results

With a challenge as substantial as the one facing AkzoNobel, Ramon was not expecting results overnight.

"I've been part of this project for almost two years, but we have been working with inriver for nearly five," he explains. The first BU was rolled out within 3 months after the start of the project and after go-live further optimized. Subsequently, we started rolling one BU at the time, this makes it a slow process, but if we want to get the inriver solution integrated successfully into our ecosystem it's important that we take our time."

"We started with around 25 ERP systems in place, and we are aiming for four or five in the near future. But it's more than that. There are numerous programs and systems underneath those ERPs, and with the inriver solution we want to reduce those, too. It's a big task."

But despite the transformation still very much being a work-in-progress, there have already been some timely wins along the way.

"It's now easier for us to create technical datasheets," says Ramon. "And even though we still have some issues with our specific requirements when it comes to technical data, we are working with Ctac and inriver to find a new solution for our needs. That is the flexibility of PIM."

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