

Ecolab



With more than \$6 billion in global sales, Ecolab is a global leader in cleaning, sanitizing, food safety and infection control products and services. Headquartered in St. Paul Minnesota, Ecolab has 26,000 employees worldwide and serves customers in more than 160 countries across North America, Europe, Asia Pacific, Latin America, Middle East and Africa.

Product Labeling Management

Business Needs and Challenges

Ecolab was undergoing an important business initiative to consolidate and rationalize their cleaning product labeling process which involved thousands of different product SKUs — each of which required regional-specific labels to support different languages and product labeling coding and compliance requirements.

Ecolab needed to implement product labeling quality and consistency controls around the globe, but afford each region the flexibility necessary to meet timely new product marketing needs. Adding to the complexity, new product SKUs were continually flowing into (and out of) the various global markets. The company's product list had expanded from 6,000 to over 12,000 separate product SKUs to satisfy a variety of country-specific size, code, and label variations.

The situation had grown too cumbersome and complex to manage centrally, and despite the use of sophisticated systems such as SAP and MapX, the various country managers had adopted desktop tools like Excel to track and manage product variables.

"Even for a large organization like us, the structure was far too complex," said Daniël Van Eeckhoutte, an Ecolab Business Portfolio Manager and Six Sigma Black Belt. "Sometimes one product carried different codes depending on the country and system. It was difficult to know with any real certainty how many products we actually marketed and sold."

Many of the large commercial software products that Ecolab evaluated were too costly to deploy and support enterprise wide, and/or too difficult to configure to properly handle the myriad of language and local requirements. It became evident early on that a custom built solution was the only viable option to meet Ecolab's product mapping, documentation, and labeling functionality needs.

As a result, Ecolab embarked on an internal initiative to design and build a customized MS Access database to support their product labeling management needs. Over time it became obvious that the effort and complexity associated with managing 50+ separate distributed copies of MS Access (one for each country), and aggregating the data for reporting purposes was enormous. The MS Access solution proved to be non-sustainable from both functionality and cost perspectives.

The Design and Planning Phase

PCA evaluated Ecolab's situation and business needs, and determined that migrating the native MS Access datastore to SQL Server, and providing Ecolab's regional managers with Internet access to a *single* MS Access system via Citrix was the fastest and most cost-effective approach.

Ecolab had invested many hundreds of man-hours to develop a highly-customized labeling management solution in MS Access, and simply moving the back-end to SQL Server not only preserved this investment, but PCA could complete the project in several months, and at a fraction of the cost required to re-write the entire system.

The PCA Solution

From a business perspective, the new Ecolab Product Labeling Management system provided a single database to manage all product labeling needs throughout Europe. The new system easily handled the 60,000 plus records imported as part of the legacy MS Access data mapping process, while providing a secure, stable environment for managing and storing standardized product data – including country-specific sizes, formulations, and manufacturing origin information for maintaining compliance.

From a technology standpoint, the system was built on Microsoft SQL Server, leveraging Ecolab's substantial investment in the Microsoft platform.

Key capabilities of the new Product Labeling Management solution include 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 Business Benefits

The new Smart Client solution enabled Global Reserves to scale its business using a single server, and provided lightning fast response time and substantially improved ease of use. Key business benefits to Strategic Reserves Corporation included:

- Dramatic cost savings vs. commercially available software products
- "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 FTEs/year

"From initial planning to project completion, our communications with PCA were extremely simple and clear. They provided us with a team of top-notch software engineers who also understood our business goals, enabling us to deliver 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 costs. The new system provides senior management, administrators, R&D, marketing, and others with a unified view of the entire European product list, while enabling the company to maintain consistency and compliance with strict, ever-changing labeling requirements."

Daniël Van Eeckhoutte, Business Portfolio Manager

