

MAKING IT EASY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it, goes the old adage. But that doesn't mean it can't be improved. CEBOS is all about improvement. The Southfield software and services outfit transfers the task of implementing and maintaining rigorous business quality standards from a manual paper-based system to an automated one. As a result, CEBOS customers are enjoying significant savings from the inefficiencies in the value chain, and their customers are much more satisfied.

HOW IT STARTED

In the early '90s, CEBOS President Tim Burke was working for an auto manufacturing company with responsibility for instituting an ISO 9000 certification process and monitoring and managing quality performance. In his research, he discovered a similar need existed on many levels for other companies.

With a high-tech background, he saw opportunity. He computerized the process to implement and maintain rigorous quality standards for any company in any industry. In 1995, Burke built a business around it and started CEBOS.

THE NEED

Companies in a variety of industries have different regulated quality standards to meet. These standards are tested through different certification processes labeled for certain industries. For example, the tests for quality in the auto industry include QS 9000, TE 9000 and TS 16949. There are similar quality tests in the aerospace and telecommunications industries as well.

Companies are required to undergo annual quality audits to ensure they are following regulated procedures. A majority of companies maintain their quality control records on paper, with maybe a portion managed on a computer. This is very cumbersome and difficult to manage, as there is no easy way to generate critical business reports for management decision-making and business process tracking. With these systems, it is not unusual for a company to spend as many as four weeks preparing for an audit. That's four weeks of not doing revenue-building business.

THE SOLUTION

Quality certification represents a company's systematic approach to several facets of its business. With the mission to enable its customers to manage business more efficiently, CEBOS' MQI software-system covers all aspects of business process control, from product planning and document control to gage and equipment management.

HOW IT WORKS

The software automates key processes that require intense administration with traditional methods. For example, when a customer calls in a complaint, the support person on the other end of the line would use a computer-based form to log the call. With a specific internal process programmed, the form would immediately be sent to the appropriate person for corrective action. Because it is all processed electronically and the workflow is automated, the mitigation of the complaint is documented, from the time of the initial call to the time a solution was implemented. This electronic process automatically creates an audit trail, plus allows management to monitor the status of the complaint and response to the customer. In all, CEBOS has over 15 different modules that help improve the business and the workday for their customers by transforming laborious tasks to quick and simple ones.

It seems to be working: CEBOS has doubled its revenues every year while its customers are saving time and money. Customers are saving up to 20% in new product time to production and up to 85% in overall business process inefficiencies while enjoying an increase in their operating income by as much as 15%.

KEEPING IT EASY

When quality is managed electronically, a company is ready for an audit at any time. This allows it to stay focused on its core business. "We aim to bring quality to life—to make work less frustrating and efforts more rewarding, which can lead to making lives better for individuals and families as well as for companies," says Burke.

Now in its eighth year, CEBOS (www.cebos.com) still has the same fundamental goal: to help companies manage business better and efficiently. It is yet another example of how advanced manufacturing in Michigan benefits from high-tech applications created by Michigan companies.

MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

CEBOS Ltd. is just one example of the many successful high-tech companies in Michigan. The state's economy is thriving and there are many benefits that make Michigan an attractive location. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) has been a catalyst for creating a business climate where high-tech businesses are able to flourish. MEDC delivers products and services to promote the state's economic growth, targeting high-tech business sectors and tailoring services to meet the needs of individual companies and reflect community diversity. Whether it's assistance for start-ups, the promotion of high-tech clustering, online bidding for business services, or tax abatements, Michigan is a great place for high-tech businesses. Visit MEDC's Web site at www.michigan.org.

