

## VISIBILITY

### JUST THE FACTS

#### VISIBILITY

- **Communication is critical in production.**
- **Real-time visibility into the lab, customer self-service and auto-report generation.**
- **Customer service streamlines the process.**

**Communication is critical!** Customers want to know when all their requested tests can be completed, whether testing has begun, if any tests are completed and, if so, what are the results. There may be many layers (of people) between the customer and the person who knows precisely what is going on inside the lab, and often, the person who is performing the tests is the only individual with this knowledge. Time and energy could be put to much better use, rather than being wasted in gathering current information. This is just one example of the cost associated with poor communication.

Customers' information requests are straight-forward: what is the status of the requested tests, will they be completed on time and what are the results. Similarly, the lab wants to know what tests are required and when the products will be on-hand for testing to begin. Communication is not simple, and is even more complex when the lab and customer are not in physical proximity and something happens that impacts the test schedule. Changes are frequent.

Scheduling instability is inherent in the pre-production phases of any product. This instability results in missed deadlines, but the process can be improved.

## SOLUTIONS

**Significant return on investment (ROI)** will result from improvements in two general areas: real-time visibility into the lab and customer self-service .

**Real-time visibility into the lab** means an easily accessible display of:

- Status of the tests
- Agreed-to completion dates vs. forecast completion dates
- Slippage comments
- Test results

To accomplish this, operators must have an efficient way to post real-time changes in the test status. Lab management can then manage lab activities to best address projects that are slipping, and alert the customer as necessary.

SOLUTIONS CONT.

Customer self-service can greatly streamline the process. Customer self-service resolves into three principal activities:

- Place an order (test request)
- Check the status of an order
- Receive the results

The benefits to customer self-service is significant, suggesting a very attractive (ROI). Look to the parcel delivery business model as a pattern for success.

Placing an order is somewhat more complex if the test request is but one task in an overall go-to-market project plan. This scenario provides even greater opportunities to streamline the process. Test lab management solutions will greatly increase productivity and decrease errors if they are designed to also handle the upstream information flows.

Solutions address customer self-service from the product or project perspective but bypass lab management. Solutions exist to handle portions of the product workflow such as internal web-based Test Request solutions and commercial Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) solutions. No PLM solution today handles the test lab management. To enhance the ROI of any solution, the flow of information to and from the test lab management solution should be automated.

CONCLUSION

Labs and their customers **waste time and expend significant energy** trying to ascertain what is going on. This wastage can be eliminated. Establish a process where-in the individual who performs the tests provides highly-visible, real-time feedback to management, engineers and customer.

When evaluating the cost (test process breakdown, recalls, and higher failure rates) of doing nothing and benefits (speed to market and accuracy of results) of better managing your labs by providing real-time visibility, **the ROI is quite high.**

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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