Gallatin Tracks Compliance Through Software

Gallatin Steel, Ghent KY, is a joint venture between ArcelorMittal and Gerdau Ameristeel—with equal emphasis on safety, environment, and quality. This steel manufacturer has a Contract Strip Production facility capable of producing more than 1.4 million tons of hot band coils on an annual basis.

With numerous ISO certifications under its belt, Gallatin is no stranger to implementing quality consistency programs. That’s why, when the company faced procedural issues relating to safety and documentation in recent years, they took immediate action.

“We have many work procedures that we must follow in the manufacturing process,” explains Arlyn Richards, manager of information systems for Gallatin Steel. “We were using a manual method to route the documents for review and then record the fact that each individual had reviewed the document. The way we did this was to put a signature sheet as a cover sheet on the document, then route it around to review and sign. The documents were always getting lost and there was no way to track to see who was holding the process up. We had more than 10 three inch binders full of the routed documents with the cover signature sheets. Plus, the binders were never even close to being up-to-date.”

The primary issue that spurred action had to do with the company not having adequate certainty that the employees were fully up-todate on procedural documents “We had an incident occur where an employee’s safety was in jeopardy and there was property damage. The question was asked as to whether he’d read the proper procedure,” says Richards. “We could not find the documentation to show that he had. We needed a method to ensure that all Gallatin Steel employees had reviewed the procedures and that it was recorded.”

Gallatin found it’s solution in Hyland Software’s OnBase, a fully integrated enterprise content management (ECM) software suite. Specifically, Gallatin had success with OnBase's document knowledge transfer (DKT) module, which allowed the company to better monitor and audit reading and compliance. Each week the company would generate a report that would show each employee who was 15 days delinquent in reading their assigned procedures. The report was then routed to their supervisors who were then directed to have their people review and sign-off on the procedures.

In addition, there is a weekly report that shows employees who are 30 days delinquent in reviewing their procedures. This goes to the department head, who puts further pressure on the employees to review the documents. Finally, there is a weekly report that shows employees who are 45 days delinquent. This goes to the president of the company. Says Richards: “Being on the 45 day report puts an employee’s career at the company in jeopardy.”

“DKT has also helped us have successful audits. System administrators can instantly validate compliance according to either the policy needing to be reviewed, or by employee, and determine if action needs to be taken. All of that information can be available electronically to auditors. The auditors can see exactly the date and time at which the document was marked and read so it is clear that requirements were met for that policy,” he says.

“DKT was very easy. We trained the department heads and a few managers. We documented the process so we could easily repeat it for any new hires. It all went very smoothly,” says Richards. “On some of our more complicated workflows, we developed a training course that lasted between one and two days. For employees who only need to view documents stored in OnBase, we had a two hour class. Part of the reason this was so easy is because a majority of our OnBase implementation was spent interfacing OnBase directly into our existing applications using the Application Programming Interface available with OnBase. This way employees could still view documents in the applications they were already used to seeing, but the documents were stored in OnBase on the back end. Documents went automatically into OnBase and were retrieved and displayed within the application.

“We have an enterprise solution with enterprise results. Using DKT, our employees better know and understand safety policies. I know in June, 2008 we measured that we were at 1,292,400 manhours worked without a lost time injury. This is a huge risk that is mitigated. It also helped us support compliance initiatives for ISO 9000, QS 9000, ISO/TS 16949 and Sarbanes-Oxley. And we can report on all of this information, which is critical in these tough economic times. We need to prove internally and externally that we are operating as efficiently as possible, and OnBase allows us to better perform financial projections and audits.”

Customer service has also been dramatically impacted. “And employees are safer because of it,” Richards says. “Everyone has to read and understand the procedures. They do not want to appear on any of the delinquent reports. We are constantly adding more types of documents to our procedure sign-off.”

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