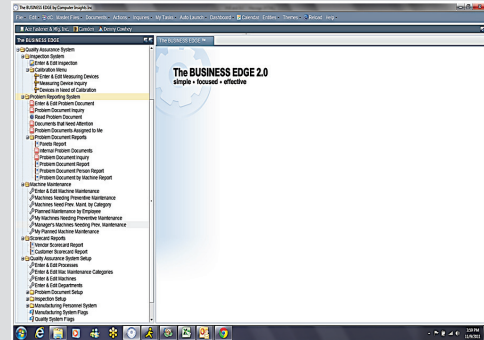# Tracking Your Fasteners

by:

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Sample screen from The BUSINESS EDGE 2.0 Quality Assurance system.

Integrated Quality Systems

Quality assurance systems are becoming a more important part of the fastener landscape these days. Many customers are insisting on them, while others are choosing companies with quality systems as preferred vendors.

Expensive & Cumbersome

No one can argue that a quality assurance system is not useful, but they are often complicated and expensive to implement. Once implemented, the maintenance of the system can be a constant headache. Most quality systems have similar roots in that they insist that you describe in detail what you are going to do, do it and then document that you did it.

A quality manual is required and normally a consultant is hired to assist in the preparation of the quality assurance system. It is quite useful to have a consultant about since he or she has been through many audits and will be able to handle key issues that must be satisfied. The manual is different for every company as each firm's procedures are somewhat different. Many procedures need to be modified, enhanced or created to comply with the standards described in the manual. Detailed training of everyone affected is needed for uniform implementation of the quality system. Subtle differences in the definitions in the manual can make a big difference in the amount and type of reporting that the system requires. For example, if the quality manual says any vendor shipment that is one day late must be reported as a problem, it will require that many purchase order receipts be reported. If the quality manual says to consider only late vendor receipts that impact deliveries as problems there will be far fewer to report and track. The latter definition is not only more forgiving, it is also more practical. When a person is looking at the vendor report card, it provides more useful information.

Typical Standards

Some typical fastener industry quality specifications include *ISO 9001:2008* and *AS 9120*. All quality assurance systems have certain things that are required. These include an inspection system, a problem reporting system, a machine maintenance system and the vendor and customer report cards.

The Nonintegrated System

In many companies, the quality assurance system is a separate nonintegrated system maintained in a separate database from the in-house ERP system. Maintaining the two separate systems becomes problematic. The quality system is often out of sync with the ERP data because of timing issues. When this happens, preparing for an audit becomes sort of a fire drill where everyone is running around trying to get their records straight before the auditor arrives.

The Integrated System

The ideal way to implement a quality assurance system is to have it fully integrated in the in-house ERP system. This way the ERP system can handle all the following tasks with ease:

• Problem reporting.

• Corrective and preventive actions.

• Daily reminders of past due corrective and preventive actions.

• Pareto reports generated automatically based on daily activity. This provides for easy prioritization of problems.

• Control and calibration records of measuring devices.

• Daily reminders of past-due calibrations.

• Customer and vendor report cards automatically updated based on actual transactions that occur.

• Reports in the system to help analyze data.

• Data exported into Excel for custom reports.

• Maintenance of the approved vendor list.

• Product inspection results entered directly when performed.

• Maintenance logs kept, and people that need to do the maintenance receive follow-ups.

• Storage of critical product specifications, in-bound and out-bound communications.

Having the quality assurance system integrated offers many benefits. A huge benefit is that when the auditor shows up everything is up-to-date and in sync. Beyond that, it saves time every day and it makes the quality a much more useful process for the company. Since the information is updated automatically, it becomes a vibrant and living part of the business, rather than another task to deal with at the end of the day. Since all the information is available at the touch of a button, the quality system becomes a tool and an advantage rather than a burden.

The follow-up reminders in the system keep everyone on their toes all year long. If the warehouse person does not check the forklift on a timely basis, the Warehouse Manager gets an e-mail so that he or she can follow up on a timely basis. Similarly, out-of-date calibrations are flagged and corrected long before the auditor shows up.

Do It Once & Do It Right

Today everyone is time starved. Also, today customers require virtually 100% accuracy. There simply is no time to run redundant systems. A fully integrated quality assurance system is just what the doctor ordered. 〈Ff〉

Dennis, R. Cowhey, CEO – Started **Computer Insights** in 1981. He served for many years on the **Illinois CPA Society Computer Information Systems Committee**. He is a frequent author of articles for industry trade magazines. Before starting Computer Insights, he served as Central District Manager for a division of **Litton Industries** (now part of **Rockwell**), that offered inventory control systems to retailers. Prior to that, he was a Credit and Financial Analyst for National Credit Office division of **Dun & Bradstreet, Inc**. Cowhey received his education at **Chicago City College** and **DePaul University**.

Computer Insights provides the fastener industry with The BUSINESS EDGE 2.0 software for efficient tracking of fasteners.