

Cessna: Meeting Materials Information Challenges

Cessna's involvement with materials information management arose from a need to ensure the "best possible data integrity, to manage numerous data formats, and a desire to ensure consistent data analysis techniques". Speaking at an Open Seminar hosted by the National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR), Don Snyder, Cessna's M&P Engineering Specialist, explained they wanted to maximize the traceability of materials information, moving data storage away from shared drives, Excel workbooks, Access databases, and internal reports. The company also sought a secure system with good accessibility features.

To meet these needs, Cessna adopted GRANTA MI™ as their materials information management system. The initial project involved incorporating reference data, internal data, legacy data, and suppliers/customer data within a centralized database, making it straightforward to search and apply this information (with appropriate permissions). Snyder also explained the importance of using a system that interfaced well with existing software.

While sharing experiences of rolling out the system, Cessna emphasized the usefulness of the training offered by Granta. In particular, Snyder mentioned the value of training on manipulating data, managing the database schema, and configuring the system to allow in-house information to be easily imported into the system, as well as exporting data in the correct format for specific applications. For end-users, training allowed them to quickly and securely access relevant materials information within their web browsers using MI:Viewer. "Granta's Support Team have been excellent," commented another participant from Cessna's IT team.

Execution of Cessna's materials information management approach was tied to a major project, a strategy which they strongly recommend as it is helping ensure a timely implementation. It was important to commit to a project timeline, and to identify key stakeholders—including a project champion, the internal IT team, data producers, analyzers, and users, and a non-IT 'primary owner'. They highlighted that managing the system will require ongoing dedicated resources, a worthwhile investment as they continue to maximize their 'material intelligence'.

An important feature for Cessna was access control and permissions, ensuring that users can access any data for which they are authorized. Their implementation highlighted the importance of identifying access control schema early-on, giving thought to the appropriate level of access required for different classes of users.

It was evident that the materials information management challenges Cessna faced were similar to those found by many other delegates at the event. Their case study clearly demonstrated the advantages of using a flexible commercial product to meet those needs.