



Photo: © KSB

Digital supplier documentation saves 4,500 hours of work every year

Case study: KSB

Industry insights

Like all project-related mechanical engineering tasks, the production of special pumps is subject to extensive documentation requirements that have to be satisfied alongside production. The documents need to be made available by the suppliers of the various components in good time before they pass through different departments for review and approval. Moreover, violations of deadlines and contractual obligations bear the risk of heavy contractual penalties and damage to the company's image.

The task: Transparent document management

With subsidiaries throughout the world, the KSB Group is one of the leading producers of pumps, valves, and related service offerings. Previously, project partners and suppliers exchanged information by e-mail with file attachments and without a central filing infrastructure. Most of the information regarding orders was kept stored in various e-mail inboxes or department-specific filing systems. This made it difficult to access and find information and to check the current status of documentation required for order items. In some instances, contractual penalties could not be determined because it was not immediately apparent that the suppliers hadn't provided their part of the documentation on time.



„With Fabasoft Approve, we can process complex special documentation in a transparent, effective, and user-friendly way. Complicated review and approval procedures are handled securely, reliably, and traceably on a single platform.“

Christian Strobl
Operative Purchasing Pumps & Systems Pegnitz,
KSB SE & Co. KGaA

Every control measure proved enormously time-consuming – the time spent tracking the deadlines for obtaining the required documents for each individual project, for instance, amounted to approximately 130 hours.

Managing the supplier documentation

A sub-project of the “Digital Factory” aimed to establish a central, cloud-based platform as the basis for digitally managing supplier documentation through lean, transparent processes. Throughout the project, particular attention was devoted to establishing an SAP connection to link the sales order and purchase order number with the documentation, automatic deadline tracking including a reminder feature, and the ability to evaluate delivery performance and adherence to delivery dates in order to mitigate risk and avoid contractual penalties.

The goal was to better integrate suppliers into the process so that problems could be identified proactively, while at the same time ensuring a more transparent customer-facing presence and providing an even clearer picture of the services. As part of the evaluation process, 30 providers were asked to present their solutions. A modern user interface and straightforward handling were major criteria in the selection process. Additional selection criteria included the speed of implementation and the expertise required for a global roll-out. Fabasoft Approve was the only provider capable of delivering a truly agile approach to project implementation as well as extensive functionality in the standard product, a high level of usability, and a simple IT connection.

Global platform for suppliers and customers

As of June, some 200 employees and around 30 suppliers have been working with Fabasoft Approve, the standard product for supplier documentation, in a pilot project at the Pegnitz site. In the next phase, expanding the pilot operation to the Frankenthal and Halle facilities is planned. The global roll-out is scheduled to take place following completion of the pilot projects.

Now that the application has been launched, project documents are centrally stored and accessible worldwide – a web browser with an Internet connection is all it takes for full utilization of the system. All parties involved in order management and every supplier has access to the latest documentation status in line with their access permissions. Transparency with regard to the status of the project, the scope of documentation, approvals, and revisions is always guaranteed.

„Access to the digital supplier documentation can be handled flexibly. If we add a new supplier from Chile, for instance, they can log in just as easily as a supplier from France – without having to install software,” says Christian Strobl, Operative Purchasing Pumps & Systems Pegnitz KSB SE & Co. KGaA.

Staff in charge of KSB customer documentation are also reaping the rewards of the newly launched platform. With the intelligent mass upload, documents coming from the customer are automatically renamed according to KSB’s specifications and assigned to the correct order items for the order, including any comments. This also applies to any documentation from suppliers. In the past, file names were manually adjusted to match the order number and order item identifiers, a process that was extremely time-consuming. Fabasoft Approve generates the correct file names automatically. Now there is just one environment for the entire communication, document management and document processing with suppliers and customers.

The broad range of functionalities makes collaboration much easier. For example, documents can be provided with annotations that only KSB employees can read (internal) or that everyone involved can read (public). The “Time Travel” feature enables seamless traceability for document creation. Every single change, from the first to the last revision, can be viewed as required.

Massive increase in efficiency

KSB conducted a profitability analysis for the digital supplier documentation, which determined an amortization period of less than one year for the pilot plant. The solution-driven project implementation and the efficiency of the agile project management, combined with the accuracy of Fabasoft Approve’s cost estimates, were impressive.

In brief: Digital supplier documentation saves 4,500 hours of work every year.

About KSB

The KSB Group is one of the leading suppliers of quality pumps, valves, and related services with an annual sales revenue of almost EUR 2.4 billion. The company has a presence on all continents with its own sales and marketing organizations, manufacturing facilities and service operations. KSB employs more than 15,000 people.

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