IQS

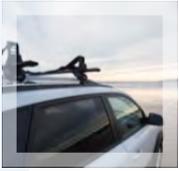## ENTERPRISE **QUALITY** MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

CEQUENT GROUP

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

8669-011717

IQS AND CEQUENT GROUP

Cequent Transportation Accessories, a division of TriMas Corporation based in Plymouth, MI, is a leading designer and manufacturer of a broad range of accessories for light trucks, SUVs, recreational vehicles, passenger cars and trailers.

THE PROBLEM:

Cequent has a long and successful history of using enterprise quality management to drive its market success. Three years ago, overseas supplier PPM was at a high unacceptable by Cequent standards and in direct conflict with the requirements expected of their domestic suppliers. In addition, as the Importer of Record when leveraging overseas suppliers, manufacturers have a responsibility to protect against the risk of defective parts entering the market. To mitigate risk and improve quality from their Chinese suppliers Cequent used IQS' global infrastructure to implement their successful domestic quality and compliance program in China.

THE CHALLENGE:

Left unchecked, Chinese suppliers (like domestic suppliers) will ignore quality. Unlike domestic suppliers, they will respond to quality benchmarks by throwing labor – end-state inspection and rework – at the problem. The Chinese manufacturing business does not have a history of quality management and quality processes, so simply dictating an end-state is not the answer. The Chinese however are masters of duplication. If providing a step-bystep process, right down to the part characteristics, you can break down cultural and traditional process barriers. Although a solid process is a foundation, an importer's responsibility does not stop there. Other concerns such as poor tooling and

equipment, and basic communication challenges can all contribute to poor quality. To complete the quality program, the importing organization needs to provide monitoring, and in-process checks to assure that all aspects of the production process meet quality standards. Importing organizations serious about quality should also provide a monitoring and compliance mechanism that checkpoints quality throughout the process and not just at end-state.

THE IQS SOFTWARE SOLUTION:

The good news is that a rigorous process for identifying, managing and monitoring quality already exists. Automotive calls it APQP, with Failure Mode and Effect Analysis (FMEA) – essentially a risk profile, and its operational counterpart, a control plan. These standards are now regularly being used in Aerospace and Defense, and have recently been extended into the medical device market to stem a growing tide of quality issues there. As Cequent's enterprise quality management software, IQS not only provides a framework for FMEA's and the associated control and inspection plans, but it integrates them with each other and the rest of the quality management system.

Before launching a quality management solution with its Chinese suppliers, Cequent first assures that they can build or prototype a product in its US labs. Once the appropriate risk profiles, control plans, work instructions and inspection plans are in place, Cequent establishes the supplier as an entity within their IQS global infrastructure and deploys the supplier

using their quality framework in IQS. This provides the supplier the step-by-step, detailed process for executing quality properly, while giving Cequent complete visibility into a supplier's real-time inspection and compliance data as well as the ability to make characteristic-level changes to the documentation when needed.

The final step for Cequent was to develop a plan whereby quality experts would spend physical time at the plant helping suppliers learn and apply the inspection process. This has not only increased the speed of supplier adoption, but it has improved the overall flow of data and communication. "With IQS, we are able to quickly break down cultural barriers, set performance expectations and forge a path to success with our suppliers."

The IQS global quality infrastructure enabled Cequent to successfully deploy a tested and proven quality program to its first Chinese supplier in less than 24 hours – a significant accomplishment. Through this quality transformation, Cequent has assurance – before product arrives in the US - that it has passed its required quality thresholds, greatly reducing future warranty costs or recalls issues.

"Typically, an overseas supplier can copy a great design, but risk rapidly escalates when the design has a defect, or the characteristic details are not coordinated and shared through the enterprise from engineering to post production." Says Kukor. "By teaching suppliers to use FMEA's and control plans as living documents, we proactively reduce PPM's, warranty and risk, while improving our suppliers' capabilities. The reality is that their success is in our hands."

"IQS enables Cequent to track supplier performance, create supplier scorecards, implement a dock-to-stock program and have up to the second information available on nonconformances. This creates a "no excuses" environment with accountability standards. "We've found that our suppliers greatly appreciate the effort we have put into our supplier quality management program because it has proven to help improve their company's performance and to build a long-term business relationship with us," says Kukor.

" IQS made it possible to develop a robust quality management process for suppliers that we could quickly and seamlessly replicate across our entire global supply chain. We plan to continue developing FMEA- based quality inspection programs in IQS to reduce our PPM's across our entire global supply base. "

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