

ENGINEERING
NOTIFICATIONS



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ENGINEERING CHANGE NOTIFICATIONS

IN THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**PRODUCED BY:
OUR SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS.**



Efficient change management and Engineering Change Notification (ECN) practices continue to be difficult to optimize in the globalized automobile manufacturing industry. Government and industry regulatory pressures mandate that manufacturers in the automotive industry be able to provide auditors with the appropriate records of approved changes in product design and production processes.

Given the ever-increasing complexity of today's automobiles, manually documented ECNs no longer suffice as the most efficient way to document changes. Compounding the challenge even further, the importance of a complete record of engineering changes increases substantially as quality issues come to light later in a product's lifecycle. To efficiently govern change management documentation/ECNs, IQS' software has the capability to integrate change management processes from an enterprise-wide point-of-view.

THE IMPACT OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT/ECN PROCESSES

Engineering changes can be a benefit or a detriment to continuously improving product quality, and automotive manufacturers at every level in the global supply chain are reporting varying degrees of success when managing changes to design elements and production

processes. Consider the ramifications of an improperly performed Product Part Approval Process (PPAP) for a new lower-tier supplier as an example of how changes to one record propagate downstream to different stakeholders.

Recent research by the Aberdeen Group sheds light on the impact of change management/ECN processes on an organization as a whole. In a revealing 2012 study, Aberdeen discovered that approximately 85% of organizations were not satisfied with their currently deployed change management processes. Research findings from Aberdeen have also indicated that there is a positive correlation between effective change management and improved lead-times, change deadline targets, product cost targets and product quality goals, as well. To uncover the keys to effective change management/ECN, automotive manufacturers must tackle the documentation challenges specific to their industry.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES IN THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Automobile manufacturers have myriad engineering change management practices to coordinate among geographically dispersed manufacturing sites and multiple tiers of suppliers.

As the global supply chain continues to expand, effectively documenting engineering changes is only becoming more cumbersome to perform with obsolesced, paper-driven methods.

For instance, minute changes to a chassis' specifications may have unintended ripple effects as products move down the assembly line and on to distribution. Manufacturers in the automotive industry may also need to call upon a particular component's complete change history to identify opportunities to remove waste if the company follows lean manufacturing principles. In the past, change management/ECN processes often led to redundant and incomplete record keeping practices, but with today's software solutions, automobile manufacturers can enable effective change management processes.

IQS' SOFTWARE ENABLES EFFECTIVE CHANGE MANAGEMENT

The top keys to effective change management are formalizing the process, improving visibility to status changes and better facilitation of changes to all related documentation, ideally automatically. IQS' software implements a single system for managing all engineering changes to formalize the process across the enterprise. Changes to documents using IQS' software update and link to related documents, which keep all stakeholders in the loop and operating within the same system to distribute ECN's to the right personnel.

As more organizations continue to search for ways to improve the change management process, technology will be a critical enabler of best practices. To truly close the loop on all aspects of quality, companies should aim to optimize change management processes in concert with an enterprise-wide quality management solution.

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