



W.L. Gore & Associates, Inc. Selects Synergis Adept® Engineering Document Management (EDM) to Achieve Global Design Collaboration

Customer Response Time is Reduced from 48 Hours to 15 Minutes across Continents

In 1973, W.L. Gore & Associates (www.gore.com) pioneered the use of GORE® ePTFE membrane for air filtration applications. This single advancement revolutionized filtration theory and practice alike. The company continues to maintain its leading edge product designs by collaborating across global teams.

Even with their world-class technology, Gore, like many other manufacturers needs to control costs, reduce customer response and product lead times, shorten manufacturing process times, and improve quality management processes. These challenges exist within its Industrial Dry Filtration business in Elkton, Maryland and Livingston, Scotland where there is the need to collaborate and share information globally between multiple functional areas. They were looking for a truly global, seamless system, which was reliable and secure. They also needed flexibility and the ability to expand and configure as their requirements changed.

Achieving Global Collaboration

Prior to implementing Adept, the two primary design centers were using two independent applications of another EDM system. The design centers were not integrated and global collaboration required sharing files via email, which increased the chances of distributing uncontrolled documents. Moreover, manufacturing locations and customer service did not have access to view design information.

“We needed a software system that would link design centers in the U.S. and U.K. and allow access from multiple manufacturing locations around the world,” said Gregory Ayres, Gore ERP Divisional Champion. After searching and evaluating multiple EDM software packages, Synergis Technologies was the only company we felt had a solution that would work globally. Other companies talked about being able to link multiple locations. Synergis was able to demonstrate it with existing customers.”

Alan Henderson is Gore’s design associate, programmer, and now a global administrator and trainer for Synergis Adept. He explains further, “Our primary aim was to link our individual design centers in real time with a seamless solution. In addition, we wanted our offices around the world to be able to access the system to search and locate documents when required, which would take some of the workload away from our design offices.”

Currently Gore has 15 licenses being accessed by 60 users spread across the US, UK, mainland Europe and the Far East. Being a global company allows Gore to use international time differences to its benefit and the Synergis license policy gives them the flexibility to take full advantage of this. Having the option to lock or assign a license to a specific associate means they do not need to worry about the main users being locked out when they need immediate access. Additionally, the security features in Adept fit in with Gore’s plans perfectly, and the company is able to allow users access without fear of compromising its data.

Customer Response is Reduced from Days to Minutes

The advantages of Adept can be easily recognized when evaluating a specific project. Ayres explains, "We have taken numerous orders in both continents where the design actually originated on the other side of the world. This usually occurs when a multinational company purchases or opens a facility in a new region which uses the same filtration equipment as the parent. In the past, if the request was taken after the originating design office had gone home for the day, the remote manufacturing site or sales office would have to wait until the responding design office could contact the originating design office and have the design information emailed over. Response to the customer could be 24 to 48 hours or up to 72 hours if it fell on a weekend. With Adept, our associates are able to review the design and answer the customer inquiry immediately, regardless of where the design originated. In fact, when design information is required, we decreased customer response time from 24 to 48 hours to less than 15 minutes. We now have the ability to reduce the design time by sharing design work load between the two design teams."

Henderson adds, "As many of our product designs are evolutionary as opposed to revolutionary, Adept allows us to locate similar designs within seconds and use existing documents as base templates for new designs cutting our design cycle time significantly. Adept also allows us to keep a full history of each design and Adept's 'relationship' feature means we can link associated documents to provide a 'family' history for each design."

Gore is using Adept to manage the product design and management process, as well as a repository for product attributes. Ayres explains, "We have been able to implement key concepts of Lean Business Processes by standardizing and increasing the quality of product attributes, reducing the number of hand-offs in our business processes, decreasing response times by providing access to information globally while maintaining a high level of security around Intellectual Property. We have also implemented a platform that can be integrated with our ERP system in the future."

Even though Gore's Quality Assurance systems were already in place, Adept has made it easier to adhere to those systems, the processes simpler for users to follow, and improved the ISO business processes for product design.

User Acceptance

While management may buy into the business benefits of a new document management system like Adept, it is important that the users of the software have a good experience.

"On a scale of 1 to 10, I would rate user acceptance a 10. We have used multiple tools over the years, and this is the best by far," said Ayres. "Our associates were able to use Adept in less than four hours. They were fully up to speed in less than two weeks."

Like most manufacturers, Gore employs a variety CAD and related software to create engineering drawings — AutoCAD, AutoCAD Mechanical, 3D Studio VIZ, and MS Office. Designs can range from 2D, 3D, Raster and sometimes even animation for presentation purposes, depending upon the product being designed. Being well integrated with these applications is critical. In fact, Adept software's bi-directional attribute linking in both AutoCAD drawings and in MS Office documents is seen as an extremely useful tool.

In practice, Adept was straightforward to implement and Gore now finds that they are using it much more than was originally envisioned. With Adept, the attribute mapping is a very simple process. Adept's revision control is another important aspect that has suited Gore's methods perfectly.

Fast Implementation with Maximum Results

"It may seem strange that I am the global administrator as I am based in the U.K. and our main Adept server is based in the U.S. with data repositories in several locations," said Henderson, "but the administration tools in Adept make it simple for me to carry out any administration tasks. In practice, Adept has proven to be very robust and actual time spent in administration has been minimal."

Henderson adds, "The changeover from our old system was managed in such a way that we experienced no actual downtime while switching over to Adept. Once the initial set up was complete, apart from setting up new users, which only takes a few minutes, I have had very little to do in keeping Adept running. Our previous system was very heavily customized and I spent a lot of time in getting it just the way I wanted it to be. As we were reviewing Adept and preparing for the installation, I had planned for a number of custom functions that I wanted implemented. As it turns out, after a year of using Adept, I can see very little, if anything, that I would want to change in the way Adept has fulfilled its task."

Previously, several offices used completely independent installations of their EDM system to manage a variety of documents. Collaboration between offices was difficult and took excessive amounts of time, often hampered by the fact that they were in different time zones. Only the design offices had access to documents and design associates were often asked to locate documents for other business users, often at inopportune moments.

Within a year, Adept has helped the company reduce design cycle time, make data entry more consistent, and eliminate duplicate data entry, along with all the potential errors that entails. The solution has also provided Gore with immediate access to a global repository of designs and data--regardless of the fact that those designs and data may actually be physically stored on a different continent.

Trust and Responsiveness are Key to Success

Henderson sums up the benefits of EDM. "Document management is a critical aspect of our business. We need to be able to locate documents and data quickly with the minimum of fuss and effort. Adept allows us to achieve that consistently. In our business it is not only the designers and engineers who need access to documents quickly, but we have business users throughout the organization who need information at their fingertips and Adept allows us to put that information within their grasp. Many of our users have been waiting (and asking) for a tool like Adept for years. Once they have been introduced to Adept, without fail, they are all eager to get working with it."

After succeeding with Adept in Gore's Industrial Dry Filtration business, the company has since implemented it in two additional businesses and there is a third on the horizon. They plan to use it in any business that needs to collaborate as part of its design activities in multiple regions of the world. In addition, they would like to integrate the data and documents in Adept with the next version of their ERP system.

"Synergis proved Adept to us through demonstrations and in providing full and honest answers to all our questions," said Henderson. "In the few times that we have had to call upon the Synergis help desk, I can honestly say that the Synergis team's responses have far exceeded our expectations. I cannot recommend the Synergis team highly enough. "

Ayres concludes, "The main advice I would give a company endeavoring to implement a document management system is this. The most important factors in selecting a partner should be based on trust. Do you believe that the company standing behind the software is trustworthy? If you trust the company, the second question is 'Can they demonstrate the functionality they

claim to provide?' The combination of trust and proven functionality is what will provide a tool that works, and a company that will stand behind its product. Synergis has done both. The tool does what they said it would right out of the box. The people at Synergis are dedicated to their customers, say what they do, and do what they say."

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