

Reckitt Benckiser Case Study

When Reckitt Benckiser had to meet an immovable launch date for a vital new product and its associated manufacturing facilities it turned to Novotek Solutions to ensure its systems were up to the task

Making The Date

Background

Reckitt Benckiser Group plc is a British multinational consumer goods company headquartered in Slough, England. As a global manufacturer of health, hygiene and home products, it operates in a highly competitive field and is constantly striving to expand and develop its portfolio.

The company had previously engaged Novotek Solutions to stabilise and upgrade its production facilities, and got in touch again when there was a requirement to build and put into operation a new processing suite for manufacture of a new product.

“The product was a new cough medicine that it was being launched in Australia,” said Chris Barlow, Technical Director, Novotek Solutions. “The high-profile launch date was fixed; the logistics were booked and the marketing schedule was all in place.” With substantial resource and funding committed to the project, there was no room for error.

Although Novotek had worked with the client previously on system upgrades and renewal, this project presented a different challenge as it involved an entirely new production area.

“We had to work alongside and collaborate with the mechanical engineering contractor,” Barlow explained. “The task involved developing systems for equipment that we had never seen before – and all within a very tight timeframe.”

Collaboration and implementation

As Novotek had renewed and upgraded the GE Batch Execution System that controlled production at the site, both Novotek’s project team and Reckitt Benckiser were confident that the core Batch Execution System was up to the task. Novotek worked with the installation and commissioning teams as the hardware arrived, to get it up and running reliably as soon as possible.

It wasn’t a case of simply plugging in the management control systems and firing things up, however. The company supplying the vessels had their own control system; warranties and guarantees were dependent on using the validated and tested system, so Novotek had to work with it.



“We had to ensure the Batch Execution System would work with the software system provided by the mechanical process engineering company before the systems were developed. We designed and agreed the interface that would be compatible in both directions” Barlow explained.

“This work was done after the vessels were installed, but the process engineering company was commissioning and testing their equipment at the same time as we were. We worked closely alongside them, to schedule testing and to demonstrate that the system was working.

Novotek installed a brand new Batch Execution System, specifically for the new cough medicine line, along with a new, standalone management system. It uses a Dell rack mounted batch server and two fully-functioned PC workstations.

“We connected and integrated the Batch Execution System to the existing site-wide reporting system, which meant that the laboratories and operators could use their familiar interface and existing reports templates with the new system,” he continued. But why not simply extend what was already there? The previously upgraded Batch Execution System had proved itself well capable of running the site effectively and efficiently.



“There were a number of reasons, including risk mitigation. If it became necessary to shutdown the Batch Execution System for maintenance etc, it wouldn’t take down the whole site with it,” Barlow said. Part of that risk was regulatory. The new cough medicine was purely for export and had been validated against an FDA standard; specifically, 21 CFR Part II.

The challenges and the short timescale of just 10 weeks were met and a flight took the first batch of the new cough medicine out to Australia in time for the scheduled major launch.

Outcomes

Novotek and the suppliers and installers of the new production equipment collaborated to develop systems that would work together seamlessly.

The interface, reports and other key functions are presented to operators, supervisors, laboratories and management in a familiar interface. No additional training was required.

The Batch Execution System for the new product line is isolated from the factory-wide system, which mitigates risk.

A very challenging timescale was achieved and Reckitt Benckiser was able to launch a completely new product line on time, into an important and growing overseas market.





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