

Global Automotive Supplier Uses Beacon Quality to Cut Process Failures 80%



To address challenges around audit completion and layered process audit (LPA) effectiveness, a global automotive supplier decided to implement the Beacon Quality platform in several U.S. plants.

In under a year, plants had significantly increased audit rates and accelerated corrective actions, reducing external audit findings and process failures as well as the administrative burden of LPAs.

> BACKGROUND

The client manufactures components and systems for leading automotive OEMs worldwide.

For years, the company has conducted LPAs as a requirement of doing business with automakers like Fiat Chrysler and General Motors (GM). Most plants used a paper-based system combined with a visual management system to manage LPAs, with one North American plant using an internally developed electronic system.

> CHALLENGE

Before implementing Beacon Quality, plants struggled with visibility of results and ensuring people were completing their audits. Limited manpower at some locations often left a single individual responsible for scheduling audits and following up, plus manually entering, charting and sharing results.

“We were getting hit during IATF and customer audits for ineffective LPAs or not maintaining them correctly,” says the company’s North American director of quality Systems.

He says one of the biggest struggles concerned the effectiveness of corrective actions. Default actions typically focused on retraining operators, an approach taken by many manufacturers that rarely addresses the true root cause of process failures. Part of the problem was that plants were using generic questions, a common practice where changing questions requires manually recalling, reprinting and distributing checklists.

> SOLUTION

While exploring new options to manage LPAs, he looked at two facilities already using the Beacon Quality platform. After gathering feedback from those plants and other industry colleagues, he decided to roll out Beacon Quality to five more plants.

The cloud-based platform automated tasks such as:

- **Scheduling and follow-up:** Teams can assign audits for the plant in under 10 minutes, with auto-reminders when audits are due (and overdue).
- **Accessing checklists:** Auditors receive emails with a direct link to an electronic checklist so they can complete the audit on a mobile device.
- **Analyzing metrics:** Audit results are immediately visible, as opposed to waiting for manual data entry and spreadsheet analysis.

- **Updating questions:** LPA administrators can add, rotate and randomize questions to reduce pencil-whipping and more quickly adapt to risks.
- **Closing the loop on corrective actions:** The platform allows teams to link failed audit questions to on-the-spot mitigations or corrective actions.

Working with the Beacon Quality team, the company introduced a system of quality basics with defined questions audits must cover in addition to custom items. The system captures issues by zone or department, with failed questions also tagged by categories like first-piece inspection, gauge R&R or inspection sheets.

“Every month we export data from Beacon Quality into a heat map that lets us identify a plant’s top issues in each zone,” says the quality director. “We’re then able to create more targeted corrective actions for systemic improvements.”



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– Director of Quality



“When auditors visit our facilities now, Beacon Quality usually gets best-in-class feedback.”

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> RESULTS

According to the quality director, Beacon Quality has significantly reduced the administrative burden of LPAs while improving their overall effectiveness.

“Administration time went way down,” he says, noting that the time needed to manage LPAs has gone down by half.

Audit completion rates have reached as high as 90% in some plants, while Beacon Quality data reveals an 80% reduction in process defects identified during audits.

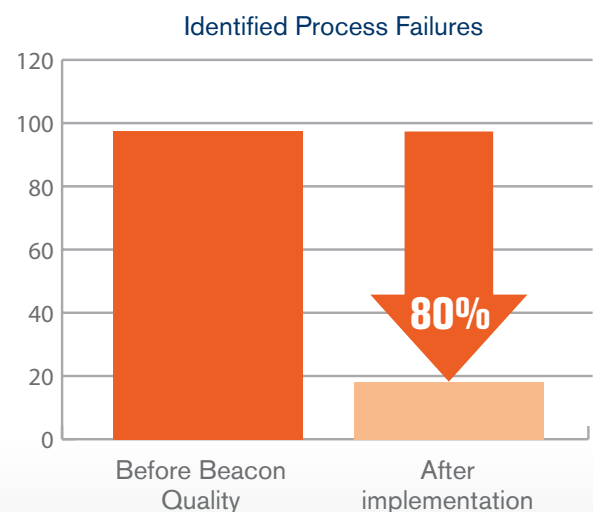
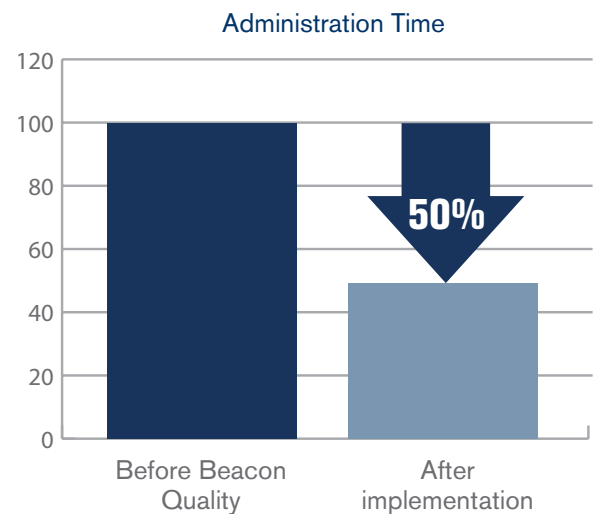
Plants can now create targeted questions for each line or production cell, driving faster improvements as compared with generic checklists. The quality director says the automatic notifications also help teams complete corrective actions more efficiently. The result: a sharp reduction in external audit findings, both for IATF and customer audits.

“Not having findings during these audits is huge for us,” he says. “When auditors visit our facilities now, Beacon Quality usually gets best-in-class feedback.”

Beyond just making a positive impression on customers, the quality director says one of the biggest advantages of the LPA platform is being able to proactively manage problems.

“When I see a facility with performance issues, I can start figuring out what’s going on sooner rather than later,” he says. “Beacon Quality lets me get ahead of the game.”

Reductions in Administrative Time and Identified Process Failures



About Beacon Quality

Founded in 1986, Ease, Inc. is the leading provider of layered process audit (LPA) software, Beacon Quality, and process performance solutions for automotive and aerospace manufacturing.

With decades of experience helping companies improve visibility and control at every stage of production, our tools promote company-wide engagement and operational excellence. Our mission: improve quality for our customers through innovative technology that empowers people to communicate, measure, learn and improve.



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