M-Files®
Simply Easy Document Management

MicroPilot®
World Leader in Miniature UAV Autopilots

"We are using M-Files' workflow features for approving invoices, handling the flow of documents from person to person based on who needs to look at document next. A number of business processes have been implemented with M-Files and this helps us out quite a bit."

-Howard Loewen
President,
MicroPilot

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Success Story

Keeping Up With ISO 9001

Autopilot developer maintains high levels of efficiency with the flexible M-Files document management system

The words "We are up!" announces a take-off at MicroPilot's 40-acre test facility, marking the successful conclusion of another round of product development. The phrase has also become a sort of motto for the ceaseless innovation of the R&D team, which has propelled the avionics company into a leading position in the growing market for miniature UAV autopilots.

MicroPilot's compact technology guides unmanned aviation flights with greater and greater sophistication with each new line of products. Its current line is now in operation in over 600 military and commercial applications in 60 countries. Two years ago, the Manitoba-based firm met the demands of this expanding global market by applying for International Standard Organization (ISO) 9001 certification. Foreseeing new complexities in documenting processes and testing, President Howard Loewen sought out document management software that would keep the high levels of efficiency of the development team, despite the extra paperwork.

"Most of what we do is software development. If you're at least half-serious about developing software, you need to have some sort of software revision control," he explains. "It just seemed natural that we would want to have a similar version control system for documents as part of our certification."

Because part of ISO 9001 standards deals with controlling documents, Loewen looked for a system that could track important files throughout the process with a complete history of edits, version numbers, and who made changes and when. "Because the instructions we use to test our autopilots are fairly critical, we want to know the history of them: what checklists we were using two years ago, as well as the checklists we are using now."

Recording ISO 9001 process history in M-Files

Loewen selected M-Files, an all-purpose document management software application that the team could easily adapt to MicroPilot's specific requirements. M-Files, integrates directly with Microsoft Windows Explorer and provides the additional functionality the team needed, such as version history tracking, fast searches through a single file repository, and automatic backups.

The low-maintenance digital filing scheme simply attaches database attributes to each document. M-Files automatically adds time and author information to each document as well.

"If you do ISO 9001 manually, the additional paperwork is a pain, but using M-Files, it's trivial," says Loewen. "For example, we have a variety of documents we have to track when we calibrate and test an autopilot. Before, we kept it on a manual filing system, now, with M-Files, we just attach the serial number as an

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attribute while saving. This way we can tie together checklists, invoices, and all documents pertaining to that one particular autopilot and get the history with a simple query."

Facilitating the flow of documents

In the two years since its adoption, M-Files has proved useful not only in organizing and accessing ISO-related materials, but all of MicroPilot's business documents. With some creative use of metadata indexing, MicroPilot staff can build customized workflows for particular document types. They can add attribute tags to indicate the work status of collaborative documents-in-progress. M-Files also contains automatic notification capabilities, sending an email reminder to the responsible party when workflow reaches a certain status.

A step up from manual filing

Overall, Loewen reports that "M-Files is a very flexible system. It's not a one-size-fits-all application; you can organize your files in many different ways. For instance, you can give different groups within the company specialized views into the files so that they can work extremely efficiently."

MicroPilot team members can set up their own custom views of project files in whatever hierarchy they like without affecting the integrity of the company-wide organization scheme.

"Typically, there is a learning curve involved when you bring in something new, but with M-Files, the interface is essentially the standard Windows Explorer interface that everyone already knows, so people have picked up quite quickly," he says. "As we saw improvements in our productivity as we have taken advantage of more and more features."

With full control over past and present documents, easy integration of the system into MicroPilot's existing processes, and a flexible platform on which to build custom workflows, M-Files electronic file management has been instrumental in not only bringing the organization smoothly into ISO 9001 compliance, but also up to a higher level of efficiency.

About MicroPilot
MicroPilot is the world's leading manufacturer of small autopilots for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and micro aerial vehicles (MAV). MicroPilot serves over 600 clients in numerous markets in 60 countries worldwide. For more information, please visit: www.micropilot.com. ■