

Aconex boosts Albemarle's vision for a sustainable future

With the construction of one of the world's largest lithium production facilities in Kemerton, Western Australia, Albemarle Corporation is a leading supplier in the transition to a clean energy future. In fact, analysts worldwide consistently rank Albemarle as one of, if not the largest, global producers of lithium for electric vehicle batteries.

Headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, Albemarle Corporation employs over 7,000 people and serves customers in 100 countries. Albemarle is committed to cleaner, safer and more efficient operations across its lithium, bromine and other energy storage business units.

With several projects in simultaneous development across Western Australia and over 1000 personnel, Albemarle decided the time was right to move from its legacy Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) and take a more wholistic approach to managing its portfolio of capital projects with Aconex.

Transitioning from one system to another, especially in the middle of a project, had the potential to create serious delays and business impacts. To assist her small and newly formed IM/DC team with the implementation, information manager Anne Ho added information systems analyst, Orlando Tonholi, who had prior experience implementing Aconex in a previous organisation, to the team. Tonholi added "The feedback from Oracle Aconex users is very positive. It's user friendly, easy to navigate and search for content."

It was an uphill battle against time and resources to migrate and transition to Aconex with minimal business impact. It was a critical time for the Kemerton Expansion, a \$1.6bn project. The whole implementation process happened in a compressed timeline and included business requirements workshops to scope, various levels of onboarding and training for Albemarle personnel, external contractors and vendors.

Owning the data and the process.

In Australia, it's common for principal owning organisations to invest in a capital project and then work with an engineering procurement and construction management contractor (EPCM). The EPCM will often nominate its preferred document system and is then responsible for the delivery of the project. This includes the processes and management of the project data. While there are many benefits to turnkey arrangements:

"A reliance on the EPCM to manage the entirety of the project data can result in a lack of visibility for the asset owner, limit multi-company participation, complicate project handover and result in wasted time due to a lack of consistency across projects."

As part of the transition to Aconex, the Albemarle IM team leveraged Aconex's functionalities and were able to re-engineer the submission process to allow the suppliers and vendors to submit documentation directly into Aconex. Tonholi says Oracle Aconex allows the users to see all the content and data from suppliers and vendors. The greater visibility allows Albemarle to have oversight and own the content throughout its lifecycle thereby minimising double handling of documents between EPCM And Albemarle. More importantly, it reduces handover requirements and timeline.

Albemarle determined it was critical to take full ownership of an in-house system, at the same time, Aconex enabled them to collaborate with all project participants. One of Aconex's strength is its unalterable audit trail, which allows the company to have oversight of and monitor the quality of all supplier documentation being exchanged.

"The Oracle Aconex environment reduces a lot of the previous confusion that having a third party-managed EDMS created," Ho says. "We have a greater understanding of the contracts, the submission of documents, and it places us in full control, which is highly desirable from our perspective given the volatile economic environment we're operating in."

The Kemerton lithium hydroxide processing plant "Kemerton".



It was an entire team mission to reach those goals; it was a combination of systems meeting processes and our document control team lead,

Janice Paton, definitely played a big role in the success of the Aconex roll out.

The team was enthusiastic, even though they had absolutely no prior experience with Aconex and worked hard in the background on quality assurances of migrated content, transit between legacy and Aconex (in the early stages), and designed workflow to best suit the business as understanding of Aconex matured.

A new way of working

Every organisation on a project has their own private 'workspace' on the Oracle Aconex platform and controls the associated documents in their workspace, including who it shares that with and when. It cannot be shut out of the system or lose access to its data. This unique data ownership model drives trust, which in turn drives platform adoption and collaboration across organisations. Oracle Aconex has made collaboration a lot easier," Ho says.

"With Aconex we've taken a step forward and been able to re-engineer the process of supplier document submissions so that we are more or less in sync with our internal and external stakeholders."

– Anne Ho

New Oracle Aconex users will think there should be folders in the system, but that approach to information management is problematic, Tonholi says. Folders tend to reflect organisational or departmental structures and that can change over time. "Also, every department within an organisation will approach information architecture differently", he adds.

"In a folder-based system multiple versions of the same document can be stored in many different locations. Ensuring you have the latest, correct information becomes almost impossible. The Aconex document register eliminates the risks of multiple data stores / folders. Saved searches in the Oracle Aconex document register actually make things much easier than folders," Tonholi says. "It's easy to explain to project participants, and once they have been trained and experience the way information is shared in Oracle Aconex, it becomes the norm."

In addition to collaboration, Oracle Aconex allows Albemarle to standardise digital processes ensuring best practices. "Other systems available on the market don't really give you the ability to establish rigour around processes," Tonholi says. It can take new users time to adjust to a standardised way of working, but the long term benefit is everybody works the same way across all projects consistently.

Up and running in six months

Oracle Aconex has quickly proven itself as a huge time-saver since Albemarle Australia implemented the system six months ago. "In terms of implementation and transition, for Kemerton we've been able to achieve in six months what we originally thought would have taken two full years, thanks to the support from everybody in the IM/DC team, all our Albemarle stakeholders who were enthusiastic and eager to move to Aconex and of course our Australian executive management team" Ho says.

"My team has achieved so much in the past 6 months, particularly on the Kemerton Expansion Project, we were amazed at the number of workflows and the number of documents that the team has created in that time."

– Anne Ho

"Oracle Aconex is a great system for project delivery and project management in a broader sense," Tonholi says. "This is because it is fit for purpose in the construction industry. Given Kemerton's requirements, Oracle Aconex was the right tool for us." As we learn through progression and new projects, it helps us use Aconex to its full capacity and across all phases of the project life cycle. Ultimately, we hope to be able to define a fit for purpose and robust Australian Information & Document Management/ governance model for future Australian projects.

Given Albemarle's ambitious growth and its mission to "rethink the way we move, power, connect and protect by transforming essential resources with honesty, transparency, and accountability for our actions" Oracle Aconex, with its focus on transparency, accountability and collaboration is indeed the right tool for the job.