

NSL ANALYTICAL SERVICES

Commercial Testing Lab for inorganic materials creates paperless environment to enhance operations.

Company Background



NSL Analytical Services, Inc., a Cleveland-based independent commercial testing laboratory, has been specializing in elemental chemical analysis for all types of materials since 1945. Testing is done for a wide range of industries such as aerospace, ceramics, general manufacturing and pharmaceutical industries. NSL analyzes for elements in metals, non-metals, powders, solids and liquids, using analytical techniques such as ICP-MS, ICP-MS-DRC, ICP-OES, classical wet chemistry, X-Ray fluorescence, direct reader-OES, DC arc, ion chromatography, microscopy and SEM/EDX analysis. Maintaining various certifications and accreditations, NSL provides testing service with accuracy, responsiveness, reliable service for thousands of customers across the United States, Canada and around the world, according to Larry Somrack, President.

NSL has ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation and National Aerospace and Defense Contractors Accreditation Program (Nadcap) certification. They are approved by Pratt & Whitney, GE, Snecma of France, and Boeing/McDonnell Douglas, the world's largest airframe manufacturer. NSL also complies with 10CRF50 Appendix B, an important standard in the nuclear power industry.

Key Challenges

NSL management had tried a Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) from another LIMS supplier in 1995, but in 1997 changed vendors and implemented a minimal LVS Lab Maestro system. When Somrack became President in 2000, he felt a need to improve customer communication, reduce laboratory calculations, and provide enhanced automation capabilities. Sharon Martinko, Computer Administrator, joined the company to identify a LIMS that would be able to track samples, enhance billing, and connect to the various kinds of instrumentation NSL was using. She worked with Mike Boothe, Laboratory Coordinator, to find a LIMS that was compatible with the company's instrumentation, and that met the needs of a growing laboratory.

"As a commercial laboratory testing so many different materials, we wanted the flexibility of a multifaceted system, and the ability to customize the system in-house," Somrack explained. "After an extensive review of LIMS systems, we realized that LabVantage Solutions had the best system to meet our needs."

"NSL has used LABVANTAGE to create a virtually paperless laboratory. Reports, work orders and scanned documents are attached to every sample electronically. Everything is now at the chemist's fingertips," Somrack said, "and they love it!"

System Selected

LABVANTAGE's Enterprise solution has the capability to integrate multiple locations, and connects with internal and external customers, providing the complete history and genealogy of a sample. LABVANTAGE's modern, scalable architecture enables centralized management to reduce operational

costs. Its browser/server configuration allows users to access information from multiple locations quickly. It provides complete traceability through the integration of various departments and sites into a single solution, while enabling customers to have secure access with a browser connection. Customers have access to real-time information that enables good decision-making. They can submit samples, review sample status, and run predefined reports as necessary.

System Delivered

LABVANTAGE's open architecture enables the laboratory to connect to customers with business information. Prices, customer-specific details, complementary tests and services, order commitments and inventory are readily available in the system. From initial quote to final statistics, reports can be accessed online via a secure browser connection. LABVANTAGE also enables proper handling, tracking and processing of samples, following the guidelines and procedures that meet or exceed the appropriate industry standards.

Using LABVANTAGE 3.1, NSL manages its operations from sample submission to final output through LIMS, according to Somrack. The system:

- Manages all approvals.
- Notifies customers daily of the status of their samples.
- Does preliminary pricing.
- Exports files into the accounting system.
- Provides status and tracking reports.

NSL personnel can have up-to-date reports on operational status, sample backlog, samples run, and tests to be run.

When NSL decided to obtain the LABVANTAGE system, the company identified its flow of materials, and determined what kind of a core system it needed. Since the original installation, there have been three software upgrades that improved the system.

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Somrack praised the LabVantage support staff, especially Bill Kupiec and Roberta Tripp, for their handholding during the installation, and getting the system up and running. He was also pleased that they could contact other LabVantage customers for advice and custom solutions. Today NSL is pleased to offer that kind of help to other companies considering or setting up a LabVantage LIMS system.

Kupiec, based out of Albany, NY, serves as LabVantage Team Leader of Migrations. He helped to develop “optimization pieces,” because of the complexity and customization of the NSL system.

Looking to the Future

“Customers are coming to us, because we can provide high reliability in results, and short turnaround time due largely to automation and improved calculation accuracy,” Somrack added. “We are able to handle more samples per month than ever before - with less overtime.”

Somrack said that NSL has experienced a “quantum leap in efficiency, and a quantum improvement in operations,” that justified the expenditure for LABVANTAGE. “It’s a costly move for a small organization to undertake, but the rewards are good, and it’s well worth it. We have not even come close to reaching the potential of the LIMS system, and we are in the position to grow without adding personnel.”

LABVANTAGE
NSL Analytical Services
CASE STUDIES

For more information about NSL Analytical Services, please visit www.nslanalytical.com.

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