

### A MATTER OF TIME: TIMECONTROL CASE STUDY FOR MDS SCIEX

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**Situation:** Since its launch 25 years ago, MDS Sciex has become a world leader in ultra-trace chemical detection based on mass spectrometry techniques.

MDS Sciex is Canada's leading manufacturer of analytical instrumentation.

Through its partners, MDS Sciex has export sales of more than \$250 million US. About 95 per cent of this comes from foreign markets.

*(Science lesson: Mass spectrometry is a technique that is used to identify unknown compounds, to quantify known compounds, and to understand the structure and chemical properties of molecules. Mass spectrometry is used, for example, to detect and identify the use of steroids in athletes or to detect dioxins in contaminated fish.)*

A few years ago, the timesheet system used by MDS Sciex was no longer being adequately supported, and was not meeting all of the company's needs.

As well, the existing system was using the Btrieve database, and was considered not stable enough. After an analysis of the alternatives, MDS Sciex selected TimeControl.

**Solution:** TimeControl has about 600 clients worldwide with 55 in Canada, providing an electronic timesheet and expense reporting system designed to serve both Finance and Project Management.

TimeControl differentiators include support of multiple databases, a matrix approval process, links to multiple project management systems and auditability.

All of these features contributed to the selection of TimeControl by MDS Sciex.

MDS implemented the Oracle version of TimeCon-

trol, which provided stability and good performance. It has multiple managers responsible for projects, with different responsibilities related to projects and resources.

With TimeControl they could assign multiple managers, which could have different levels of approval and access to project information.

At MDS Sciex, Product Development employees report to both departmental managers and project managers in what is considered a matrix organizational structure. TimeControl does support a matrix organizational structure.

TimeControl was also integrated with the company's Primavera project management system. Primavera is one of the leading project management systems.

MDS Sciex uses Primavera to schedule projects — including resources and costs — and monitor their progress. The integration is a two-way process.

Project set-up information is downloaded from Primavera to TimeControl and actual time spent on projects is uploaded from TimeControl to Primavera.

Capturing time for R&D purposes is very important to MDS, which needed a system that had complete auditability and flexibility of recording time.

Scientific research at MDS Sciex is subject to R&D tax credits.

TimeControl will only allow changes to approved time records in a controlled fashion, much like a financial system debit or credit memo with an audit trail.

TimeControl provides the needed audit trail in such a way that the scientists are not complaining about putting their time into the system.

MDS Sciex has licenses to allow up to 350 users, and cur-

rently has 315 active users. Although expense reporting is available from TimeControl, the company has opted to use manual systems.

There is a need for remote access by employees, and TimeControl provides a Web-based version of their timesheet that only requires a browser on the computer of the employee.

Thus, the employee could update their timesheet from anywhere — even from someone else's computer.

**Challenges:** MDS Sciex creates projects at a detail level in Primavera. However, the company did not want to track time at the detail level in the timesheet system.

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By mapping the detail level that was downloaded from Primavera, MDS Sciex was able to enter time at a higher level. By using custom fields and mapping rules, MDS Sciex was able to accomplish this without customization.

Although integration with many accounting and ERP systems is available from TimeControl, the company's existing accounting system is not integrated with TimeControl.

MDS Sciex did not want to automate the journal entries from TimeControl to their accounting system, as it would have required that the actual rates be entered into the TimeControl system, and groups other than HR and finance would potentially have had access to what is considered confidential information.

For project management purposes, average rates by employee type are used to cost

out projects. MDS Sciex uses spreadsheets with built-in macros that retrieve actual rates from their HR system to calculate the actual costs for the general ledger.

MDS Sciex would like to move to the new enterprise version of Primavera.

Unfortunately, some of the functionality found in their existing version is not available in the new version. MDS Sciex employees use Primavera's e-mail system to update project status.

The status of projects is in turn downloaded to TimeControl. MDS Sciex is considering alternatives to the updating of project status within Primavera and TimeControl.

When multiple systems are integrated, there can be problems with new releases of any of the systems.

MDS Sciex is a wholly-owned subsidiary of MDS Inc., an international health and life sciences company with revenues over \$1.5 billion and 10,000 employees. MDS is in the process of streamlining its financial systems through a company-wide common platform initiative.

It is possible that a new system could automate not just accounting, but manufacturing at MDS Sciex, as well as tracking time and managing projects. Once again, there is the debate about a best-of-breed vs. one-enterprise-wide system.

As with most systems, there were some initial hiccups. However, these were resolved after a few months, and the system has been very stable ever since.

**Costs:** Today, a 350-employee license would cost approximately \$36,750 — about \$6,000 for implementation. A 25-employee license for just the Web-based TimeControl system would cost approximately \$2,000.

**Benefits:** TimeControl will generate automated e-mail to remind employees to complete their timesheets as well as send reminders when they are late with a copy to their managers. MDS Sciex believes that e-mail notification has virtually eliminated missing timesheets. According to Mukesh Patel, project manager at MDS Sciex, TimeControl has improved the monthly closing process by two weeks and has increased the accuracy of the data.

**Conclusion:** New technology will emerge over the next few years that should have a huge impact over the best-of-breed vs. one-enterprise-wide solution debate. The new technology is referred to as Web Services, which will allow different systems to communicate with each other.

All the major computer companies including Microsoft, IBM, Oracle and Sun Microsystems are working together to create standards. In time, it will be much easier for different systems, such as TimeControl and Primavera or TimeControl and MDS Sciex's new accounting system, to work together.

TimeControl does not have all the functionality found in Professional Service Automation systems such as billing, resource management, knowledge management, customer relationship management and opportunity management.

The developers of TimeControl, focused their attention mostly on the timesheet system. For them and their clients, timing is everything.

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