



Aras Drives Performance in Product Life Cycle Processes

Built on the Microsoft® .NET Framework, Aras Innovator enterprise open source software automates new product introduction, advanced product quality planning and product lifecycle management for companies in many industries.

Launching innovative new products on time while ensuring quality and profitability targets are achieved is critical in any industry, from high-tech and consumer goods to pharmaceutical and automotive companies. Businesses must contend with increasingly narrow windows of opportunity in the marketplace, intensifying competition, growing compliance complexity, cost pressures and shorter development cycles — while also striving to improve quality.

With so much at stake, industry-leading companies like the Freudenberg Group are continually seeking to improve new product introduction, quality compliance and risk management in order to satisfy customers and achieve profitable growth. Several years ago, executives at Freudenberg recognized

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—Tom Gill, Director, Freudenberg Group

that the \$7 billion company’s competitive success hinged on achieving better visibility and improved collaboration across its global facilities.

“The Freudenberg strategies of innovation leadership and operational excellence are designed to deliver profitable growth that exceeds our aggressive goals. We needed to enable our teams to collaborate effectively while ensuring compliance,” says Tom Gill, a director at the Freudenberg Group. “Besides having to comply with a wide variety of requirements, such as advanced product quality planning, we needed to improve launch performance while achieving compliance.”

Freudenberg found an effective solution in the Aras Innovator enterprise open source software suite from Aras Corporation, headquartered in Massachusetts. Built entirely on the Microsoft .NET Framework, Aras Innovator automates new product introduction, advanced product quality planning (APQP) and enterprise product lifecycle management for product-based companies of all sizes in a wide range of industries. Service-based organizations, including educational institutions and government agencies, are also turning to Aras Innovator for business process management to manage the life cycles of projects, services and assets.

Microsoft Enterprise Open Source

Aras Innovator is available as Microsoft enterprise open source software, meaning that companies download the production-ready software at no charge, with complete access for an unlimited number of users. Aras Innovator employs a *model-based*, service-oriented architecture (SOA) with XML Web services technology to achieve unmatched flexibility so companies can quickly deploy and easily adapt the enterprise software solutions to their unique business needs. Aras provides enterprise-class support, consulting and training services to help organizations achieve business results.

“Providing Microsoft enterprise open source software as a service makes the Aras solutions exceptionally easy for companies to use and eliminates the need for a large, up-front investment,” says Peter Schroer, president of Aras Corporation. “Aras enterprise open source software solutions enable companies to take advantage of existing Microsoft skill sets and infrastructure while realizing the licensing flexibility and IT control of open source.”

Project teams use Aras Innovator to collaborate on deliverables, track program costs and manage project risks. “Change management workflows coordinate activities, and document management capabilities provide Web-based access to files and important information to provide all stakeholders with a single version of the truth about the project status,” adds Schroer. Aras Innovator’s failure mode and effects analysis (FMEA) functionality helps identify and mitigate potential risks, and corrective and preventive actions (CAPA) with closed-loop action items ensure issues are resolved.

Across all these areas, Aras solutions provide easy-to-use dashboards for executive visibility with real-time rollups and drill-down capabilities, as well as score-cards for measuring and reporting on performance.

Delivering Business Results

The Freudenberg Group's North American subsidiary, Freudenberg-NOK, designs and produces several hundred new components each year for automotive original equipment manufacturer (OEM) customers including General Motors, Ford and Nissan. This process used to involve teams faxing and e-mailing numerous documents that quickly became disorganized and outdated. Using Aras Innovator, Freudenberg has deployed a new product development process that maps the APQP requirements to the company's own competitive practices. Project-related information is now consolidated in a single system and can be viewed over the Web from anywhere in the world.

Project leaders compile their plans and assign specific activities to team members, with associated tasks and deliverable due dates displayed in a checklist format within Aras Innovator. Red, yellow and green traffic light indicators in the Aras dashboard display project status, and these risk alerts prompt managers about important issues. Owners of these deliverables attach related documents to the project workspace as a way of updating progress to provide visibility for other team members and executives. Project activities are stored in the Microsoft SQL Server™ database, which company employees with appropriate security permissions can search. As part of its "Flawless Launch" initiative for continuous improvement, Freudenberg also has created a scorecard in Aras Innovator that measures new product introduction on 13 key performance indicators (KPIs) to gauge customer satisfaction and plant launch performance across five dimensions: quality, readiness, timeliness, service and profitability.

"By scorecarding our KPI metrics with Aras Innovator, we can quickly determine where we're



improving and isolate areas where we need to make adjustments to ensure customer satisfaction," says Gill. "Since we've implemented the Aras enterprise open source software, our teams have achieved significantly better launch performance and lower scrap rates during production, resulting in higher profits."

Microsoft Platform Supports Integrated Business Processes

Aras Innovator requires minimal infrastructure to run — Microsoft Windows Server® 2003 with Microsoft .NET, and SQL Server 2005 — and also provides flexible options to integrate with the 2007 Microsoft Office system and Microsoft server products such as Microsoft Office SharePoint® Server 2007. Because Aras Innovator is certified as Microsoft .NET Connected, and uses open-standards-based XML and SOAP Web

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Vice President of Marketing, Aras Corporation

services technologies, integration of the software is simple and data can be easily exchanged with existing enterprise resource planning (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM), product data management (PDM), and other legacy business systems.

“Having the scalable, manageable and secure Microsoft platform as a foundation is a tremendous competitive advantage for us,” says Marc Lind, vice president of marketing for Aras. “Companies are already familiar with the Microsoft environment, so they don’t need to hire new people to work with the Aras solutions, and we make it very easy for them to customize our software using a graphical, drag-and-drop solution studio.”

The Aras Innovator open source project is hosted on CodePlex, Microsoft’s online collaborative software development portal. CodePlex gives IT pros and developers from all over the world the ability to participate in the development of the Aras Innovator solutions, integration adaptors and Microsoft Office-based clients.

Developing on Microsoft technologies has helped Aras grow its business in other important ways, adds Lind. “Our team is better able to innovate using the Web services and development capabilities of the .NET environment in Microsoft Visual Studio® 2005,” he says. “As a result, we deliver more innovative products in less time and at lower costs.”

■ To download the Aras Microsoft enterprise open source software solutions, go to www.aras.com

■ To find out more about Microsoft’s Emerging Business Team and the Microsoft Partner programs available for startups, go to www.MicrosoftStartupZone.com

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