

Phoenix Contact: Powering through Projects with Quality Companion



Phoenix Contact, a major developer of industrial electrical and electronic technology products, uses Quality Companion by Minitab to streamline their process for completing continuous improvement projects.

KEY FACTS

ORGANIZATION

Phoenix Contact

OVERVIEW

- Leading manufacturer of electrical connection and industrial automation technology
- U.S. headquarters in Harrisburg, Pa.
- Founded in 1981
- More than 500 US employees
- 47 international subsidiaries

QUALITY CHALLENGE

Transform the manual process for completing quality improvement projects

PRODUCTS USED

Quality Companion by Minitab®

RESULTS

- Seamless deployment of Quality Companion
- Quicker, more consistent project execution
- Centralized all projects to one location
- Millions of dollars in company-wide savings

Phoenix Contact develops, manufactures, and distributes industrial electrical and electronic technology products that power, protect, connect, and automate systems and equipment across many different industries. The company produces more than 25,000 products, and delivering the highest quality to customers is the company's focus from product design through each stage of the manufacturing process. With so many products, process optimization is a vital piece of Phoenix Contact's continuous improvement culture, and the company does many transactional and manufacturing improvement projects every year. Project teams were using a variety of software tools to do various tasks, which required team members to manually enter project data over and over again, keying the same information into each different project form. When the company adopted Quality Companion by Minitab to manage their entire Lean Six Sigma initiative, they immediately began saving time and money by using only one application to manage and execute all their improvement projects. "Companion provides everything we need in a single application," says Joe Russo, Master Black Belt. "It transformed our continuous improvement deployment from a manual system into an efficient, integrated program."

The Challenge

Phoenix Contact is a vertically integrated company: it controls the design, production, assembly, and logistics for each product it delivers. Continuous improvement projects across each of these product development stages, as well as projects to improve transactional business functions like customer service, were scattered across the company's network in multiple files, formats, and folders.

Learn how Minitab software can help you improve quality at www.minitab.com.

It became difficult for improvement teams to update and locate project documentation. It also became challenging for management to track and report a project's status to company stakeholders.

Because a variety of software programs were used to create project forms and templates, all project information had to be entered manually. Forms weren't capable of automatically sharing common information, so team members had to spend valuable time copying and pasting shared information from one form to another. And any time information that appeared on multiple forms needed to be changed, team members needed to update the same piece of information over and over again, adjusting every form manually.

The diversity of tools being used by Phoenix Contact Lean Six Sigma practitioners made starting and following the appropriate steps in an improvement project daunting. "When Green Belts first begin, they were overwhelmed by the breadth of available tools," Russo says. "Many practitioners struggled with choosing the correct tools at each phase of the project."

How Quality Companion Helped

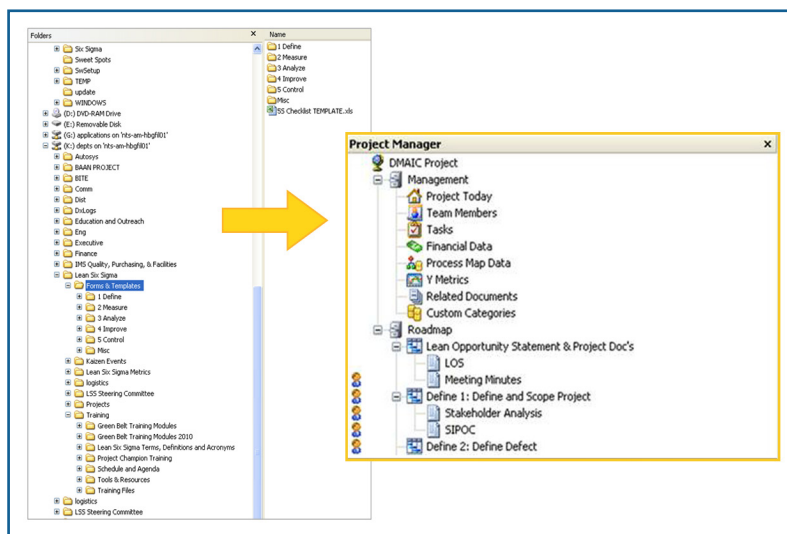
In response to challenges such as these, Minitab Inc. designed Quality Companion to organize and manage all types of quality improvement projects within one application. Quality Companion provides and stores all of the tools and documents related to each project in a single file that's easy to share, review, and archive. "With Companion, all of our project data is centralized," says Russo. "I can't imagine going back to multiple files and folders to manage my projects."

Phoenix Contact's Lean Six Sigma practitioners had been intimidated by the sheer quantity of tools available in the DMAIC toolkit and how those tools could be applied. With Companion, practitioners use the software's Project Roadmap® to organize their projects into detailed phases, along with the associated tools for each step. In addition, on-demand Coaches give the Belts guidance and examples for how to use tools at each phase of the project. "Ambiguity about how to start and complete a project is diminished," says Russo.

Russo, who mentors Lean Six Sigma belts at all certification levels within the company, says Quality Companion is equally helpful to practitioners completing improvement projects at all levels of complexity. "Companion puts project management tools at the finger tips of all our practitioners—from Green Belts in training to those at more advanced levels."

Companion also greatly reduces the amount of time teams spend manually copying and pasting project data into various project forms. The software's integrated tool set allows data to be shared throughout the entire project, so when you enter or change a piece of data in one form, it also updates other forms throughout the project. "We've saved time on redundant data entry and cut down on most of the paperwork it previously took to report the status of our projects," Russo says.

And customizing Companion's project forms, tools, Project Roadmap® and Coaches is easy. "We've developed our own standardized forms to execute projects," says Quality Manager and Green Belt Peter Muller, "and all the forms link up and communicate with each other when changes are made or data is added."



Quality Companion helps Phoenix Contact practitioners manage all the documents and tools they need to complete their continuous improvement projects in one application, rather than in multiple files and folders on a network drive.

Russo finds Companion especially helpful when it comes to tracking and monitoring project statuses, as well as presenting results to management and key project stakeholders. "The all-in-one design of Companion makes it simple to see the progress of each project," he says. "It's also easy to create high-quality project presentations directly within the software."

Results

While Phoenix Contact's deployment of Quality Companion is still in its early stages, the software's role in helping to complete several successful projects has already proved extremely beneficial. "Companion's ease of use, as well as early project successes, has made our conversion to the new software simple," Russo says. "I saw the benefits right away."

One project lead by new Green Belt and Customer Service Manager Amy Gangl eliminated the use of a manual paper filing system in the customer service department. "We've made our processes paper-free and saved thousands of dollars," Gangl says. And since beginning the company-wide continuous improvement initiative at their U.S. headquarters, Phoenix Contact estimates that they've saved millions of dollars.

Russo also noticed that Phoenix Contact Lean Six Sigma practitioners have been empowered by Companion's built-in guidance throughout each project phase. "Quality Companion has enabled more employees to execute projects with confidence," he says.

The increase in project quality and the ability of teams to work through projects more efficiently has been a huge advantage for Phoenix Contact. "Companion has allowed our team to do what matters most," Russo says. "We've been able to quickly and successfully deliver projects with bottom-line improvements for our business."

PHOENIX CONTACT
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LEAN/SIX SIGMA PROJECT CHARTER

Project Name: _____ Project Start Date: _____ Report Date: _____

Executive Champion: _____ Project Champion: _____ Black Belt/Green Belt: _____

Project Scope: _____

Department: _____ Business Area: (RBU_Service C)

Metric	Benefit Category	Baseline	Goal	Impr
	<input type="checkbox"/> TANGIBLE			
	<input type="checkbox"/> INTANGIBLE			
	<input type="checkbox"/> TANGIBLE			
	<input type="checkbox"/> INTANGIBLE			
	<input type="checkbox"/> TANGIBLE			
	<input type="checkbox"/> INTANGIBLE			
	<input type="checkbox"/> TANGIBLE			
	<input type="checkbox"/> INTANGIBLE			

Project Benefits: _____

Customer(s): _____

CTQ (Critical to Quality): _____

Capital Expenditure Requirements: _____

FY Savings: _____ Extended Savings: _____

Project Champion: _____ Finance Concurrence: _____

Define Measure Analyze Improve Control

Project Charter

Project Authorization

Organization: _____ Champion: _____ Process Owner: _____

Project: _____ Project #: _____

Problem Statement: _____

Project Objective: _____

Estimated Defect Level: _____ Initial Goal: _____ Estimated Benefits: _____

Approval Date: _____ Champion Signature: _____ Process Owner Signature: _____

Estimated Completion Date: _____ Project Leader: _____ Financial Analyst: _____

Project Team

Name	Role	Comments	Phone

Quality Companion provides more than 100 built-in forms that are easy to modify and redesign. It was simple for Phoenix Contact practitioners to convert forms created with other programs into Companion's templates.