

# CASE STUDY

## Outsourced Document Control Reduces Cost of Operations

● **INDUSTRY**  
Energy

● **COUNTRY**  
USA



With billions of dollars at stake, clear and efficient lines of communication between owner operators and their EPC partners are essential for successful execution of capital asset development projects. When these break down, owners frequently experience schedule overruns; budget overruns; manufacturing process setbacks; regulatory issues; and even safety incidents during design, construction, and subsequent operations.

### SERVICES DELIVERED:

- Business Process Outsourcing
- Document Control
- Systems/Software Administration

Rapid, accurate, and verifiable exchange of enormous volumes of technical information between an owner and its EPC, and timely review of design information received from the EPC, are critical functions that require highly-specialized and experienced document control professionals.

### CONTROLLED CHAOS

Our client, a major energy company, operates both onshore and offshore assets around the world. Many of these assets are technically complex, incur enormous capital investments, and are located in remote and often physically challenging environments. With highly volatile energy prices and intense global competition, capital asset development is a high risk, high reward endeavor. In this environment, mitigating every possible risk is vital.

### ISSUE

Responsibility for document control operations distracted client from its core focus

In 2014, at the successful completion of an unrelated project, our client asked Access Sciences to review its document control function, and what we found was far from surprising. As is common practice, our client used resources from multiple staffing agencies to operate its document control operation while managing the function internally. As the company and its document

control needs grew, this model was not scalable and presented a number of issues:

- Staffing agencies rarely provided training to their resources, and when they did, training and processes varied wildly from one agency to the next.
- Agency support, guidance, and responsibility for quality results ended once resources had been placed.
- In apparent competition for higher compensation, document control resources from different agencies were reluctant to share knowledge with one another.
- Since an agency would place an individual for a specific project, each resource would specialize in a specific client operational area (e.g. onshore, offshore) or project. This specialization prevented resources from supporting or backfilling for other operational areas.
- Agency-provided resources were highly mobile with little or no loyalty to the agency or client, and would frequently jump to a seemingly more attractive opportunity.
- In the absence of active agency oversight, our client was forced to spend time mediating personality conflicts within a document control staff that was experiencing high turnover.
- Additionally, our client had to juggle document control staff schedules that were complicated by agency-specific vacation policies, holidays, hourly or day rate schedules, and a transient workforce whose resources may, or may not, show up the next day.
- This model placed an enormous administrative burden on the client's project services organization. Multiple agencies meant constantly managing multiple contracts, payment terms, time sheets, and invoices. It also meant interviewing numerous candidates for each position (and dealing with agency competition), managing headcount as projects ramped up and down, and ultimately managing day-to-day document control operations.

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## SOLUTIONS

- ✓ Documentation control team implemented checks and balances for information quality
  - ✓ Established known protocol to eliminate confusion and misinformation
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All of these challenges proved to be a significant distraction from our client's core focus – finding, extracting, processing, and selling hydrocarbons. There had to be a better way.

## LOSE THE DISTRACTION

We have found that the most successful organizations stay laser-focused on improving their core products or services, reducing overhead, and maximizing efficiency and profit. This focus extends to mission-critical support functions such as document control – but a key challenge is that the competencies for operating and improving support functions rarely

overlap with the core mission. Outsourcing part or all of a support function can add high value capabilities to the organization without the associated burden of hiring, developing, and managing employees, or the inherent challenges posed by staffing agencies.

This client chose to bypass these issues by partnering with Access Sciences to outsource its document control function.

## TRANSFORMED OPERATIONS

With the introduction of a strong Access Sciences' manager, documented standards, repeatable processes, and a staff of qualified, vetted, and experienced professionals, the document control group quickly transformed into a highly functioning team. We were able to:

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## BENEFITS

- ✓ Client resources are now able to focus on their core business, losing the distraction of operating the document control function
- ✓ With an Access Sciences' manager as the single point of accountability, the client's oversight burden has decreased significantly
- ✓ The client enjoys a lower total cost of operations for the document control function

- Quickly add or remove staff based on workload, eliminating employee headcount overhead and the need for the client to spend time interviewing and vetting agency-provided resources.
- Cross train our unified staff, mitigating the issue of over-specialization and providing a pool of support / backfill resources for use as needed across operational areas, leading to more productivity through resource / load balancing.
- Provide the basis for standard, repeatable processes and procedures, which we then enforced across our document control team.
- Train EPC's on the client's document control processes so that EPC-generated information conforms to the client's standards, and eliminates much of the ingestion work typically performed by document control staff. In some cases, Access Sciences' document control

resources were embedded at EPC offices to further streamline this effort.

- Share best practices with our client, across our staff, and even with the EPCs. One positive outcome from this effort is that our client now includes Documents for Operations (DFO) requirements in its contracts with EPCs. The onus is now on EPCs to deliver documentation that is readily transferable to operations.

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## DEMONSTRATED VALUE

Our client's satisfaction with Access Sciences' outsourced document control service is

evident as our team has grown as the client's portfolio of assets and projects has expanded. Starting in 2014 with a staff of 8, our team now includes 18 highly (cross) trained document control professionals that support our client on projects around the world.