

Arcadis' EHS MIS Thought Leadership Forum: Six key takeaways





Successful Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) blends people, processes and technology to send staff home safely at the end of each day. Currently, there's an intense focus on the technology involved in achieving that mission, specifically EHS Management Information Systems (MIS).

At Arcadis' EHS MIS Thought Leadership Forum, part of our ongoing global event series, we analyzed EHS MIS implementations across various industries to uncover what works and what doesn't. EHS leaders and strategists from aerospace, retail, technology and other sectors provided insights for thriving digital EHS that attendees could apply to their own projects.

An attendee survey made one point clear: EHS teams are struggling to optimize their systems and processes. Forty percent stated that their organization isn't using its current solution effectively, and, on average, a moderate amount of proactive risk management data was being lost or overlooked.



Between the thought leader presentations, Q&A sessions and conversations held on the event floor, six areas emerged as critical facets to EHS MIS implementation projects:

1

Maximizing deployment speed

Most attendees stressed a need to deploy programs quickly. Organizations are sunsetting inadequate or dated systems in favor of globally integrated platforms (more on that later). The desire for deeper analytics, better reporting and increased collaboration pits EHS teams against tight deadlines.

Quickness is fine, so long as caution isn't left in the dust. There's no value in quickly implementing a plan that's obsolete shortly after deployment. A hasty decision, like selecting a software without considering all user needs, could become a costly mistake that you can't take back.

One upside to quickness is avoiding "analysis paralysis." Instead of trying to anticipate and solve every issue at once, you can learn and improve through testing. You will reveal organizational strengths and pain points sooner, and addressing them in real-time leads to practical, repeatable and scalable solutions.

Look to your executive stakeholders to set the pace for your organization. Having leadership that was willing to accelerate when appropriate helped one presenter's project maintain momentum and gave their team more breathing room for time-consuming steps.



2

Agile vs. Waterfall: Which approach works best?

Presenters had differing opinions on whether to use an agile or waterfall methodology for implementations. Each has its distinct advantages and disadvantages. Reflecting on organizational strengths and weaknesses, as well as project parameters such as scope and schedule, should help you determine the best plan for action.

AGILE METHODOLOGY

Pros:

- Reveals unanticipated problems/solutions through testing and learning
- Creates early training and feedback opportunities
- Flexibility to adjust throughout project
- Leverages subject matter experts (SME) from various working teams

Cons:

- Can be difficult to know when a project is “done,” and it’s very easy to get caught in a never-ending cycle of “improving” product
- Could be an adjustment for staff not used to agile methodology

WATERFALL METHODOLOGY

Pros:

- Focused and tightly-governed
- Firm scope and schedule
- Clearly defined decision-making roles
- Most organizations are accustomed to this approach

Cons:

- Rigidity (i.e. no turning back after a phase is completed, leaves little room for changes to objectives or scope)
- Projects are passed from one team to the next, limiting collaboration
- Difficult to define the scope and schedule of the project before adequate discovery has been completed



3

Balancing implementations with “day jobs”

Presenters and attendees agreed that balancing EHS MIS implementations with day-to-day EHS work can be an arduous task.

There is no simple remedy for this; these projects take substantial effort and many organizations don't have the capacity to build robust teams outside of the standard EHS business scope. Your best bet is to help your organization recognize EHS' burning platform and inspire organizational change.

Strategize your project communications to captivate stakeholders. With leadership, highlight EHS' role in supporting your organization's values and overall business goals. For users in the field, describe the ways you will make the workplace safer and empower them to perform better at their jobs.

Adding SMEs from other business areas to your core team can inspire healthy debate around potential threats to adoption, and asking for insights from working teams can give you a practical look at how a new system or process will be received in the field.

A cross-functional team spreads EHS MIS champions throughout a company. These super users can supply first-hand knowledge of improved capabilities to their teams, increasing long-term use and maximizing new tool and processes capabilities.

Decisions by committee can be a challenge

One presenter stated that a major pain point in planning was that the loudest voices drew the most attention. Keep user and organizational needs at the forefront of every discussion to ensure they aren't drowned out by force of personality.

Avoid top-heavy decision-making by divvying up decisions at appropriate levels. Allow team or site leaders to apply their expertise; a shared responsibility can expedite the journey and create a vested interest in project success.



Collaborative data streams

Consider differences among users in the EHS MIS data stream and the ways they could affect data rollups. Definitions of terms might differ across languages, business lines or working teams, for example.

Using drop down menus, multiple choice options and visual indicators along with the ability to submit written descriptions of incidents supports data consolidation. Effective data rollups lead to more proactive safety insights.

4

Adopting globally integrated platforms

Many organizations at the event were dealing with disparate systems that don't communicate with each other or optimize the data they collect.

An enterprise-wide platform provides a single source of truth for all EHS needs. It leads to more standard solutions, consistent data reporting and accountability among users. Whichever platform you choose, it should serve as a foundation for an enhanced EHS process.

With one integrated platform, you can put more resources toward cross-function and cross-system collaboration, creating deeper insights for increasing safety. Plus, you can eliminate time and money spent training on multiple systems and managing their user licenses.

Your platform will be most effective when it's tuned to your exact needs. Creating the initial project scope through a user experience lens can help you avoid costly customizations down the line.



5

Involving Information Technology (IT) and other cross-functional teams

Most of our Q&A sessions touched on IT in some way. Remember that EHS MIS implementation is about process and people as much as technology. IT plays a key role, but it's not a core function of EHS. Partner with IT to help with the technology but be sure to drive the conversation.

Presenters recognized the struggle attendees might encounter getting adequate IT support. Prepare a strong business case around the value of including IT in your project that you can pitch to leadership when needed. And collaborate beyond IT - include all key stakeholders early in the process, such as corporate and business unit operations and other EHS stakeholders.



6

Planning for continuous improvement

So you've built the right team, you've picked the ideal software and you've designed the proper rollout. Then what?

Recognize that implementation isn't an endpoint. It's the start of an optimized EHS that improves workplace safety and efficiency. System sustainment through continuous improvement is critical as the program transitions to post-implementation.

All presenters advised emphasizing user friendliness at every step. Provide easy access to training and design a training schedule that best fits your organization.

Sustained adoption maximizes return on investment. The more users leveraging the system correctly, the more useful that system becomes. With a robust system that's easy to navigate, it should be simple track who's using the system and who's not.

Hold team leaders accountable when staff isn't using the system, but also to dig deeper and find out why that's the case. Exploring dissension can uncover unanticipated problems – whether they're people, process or technology-related – and allow your team to address them before they become systemic.

Use the new MIS to spark a philosophical change in your organization: Discovering problems isn't a negative thing, and you want to beware the "happy path." Empower teams to seek out potential problems, search for system and process improvements, and maximize your new EHS MIS capabilities.

Information-driven performance

Organizations are looking to enterprise technology solutions to better manage their risk, compliance and governance programs. Arcadis helps you take control through what we call Information-Driven Performance (IDP) — integrating the right systems, processes and data across business functions, structures and geography to transform your business performance. IDP isn't just about big data or EHS MIS. It's about using information as an asset and providing operational or integrity management systems across the business.



Download The Price of Silence.

Insights and proactive risk management are being lost or overlooked due to the volumes of data collected without enterprise-wide systems in place to consolidate it into digestible, actionable insights. Arcadis surveyed more than 50 EHS experts from multinational companies to identify emerging trends in data acquisition, management and reporting and the benefits of increasing efficiencies and capabilities in these areas.

<https://www.arcadis.com/en/united-states/our-perspectives/2018/the-price-of-silence-is-growing/>



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