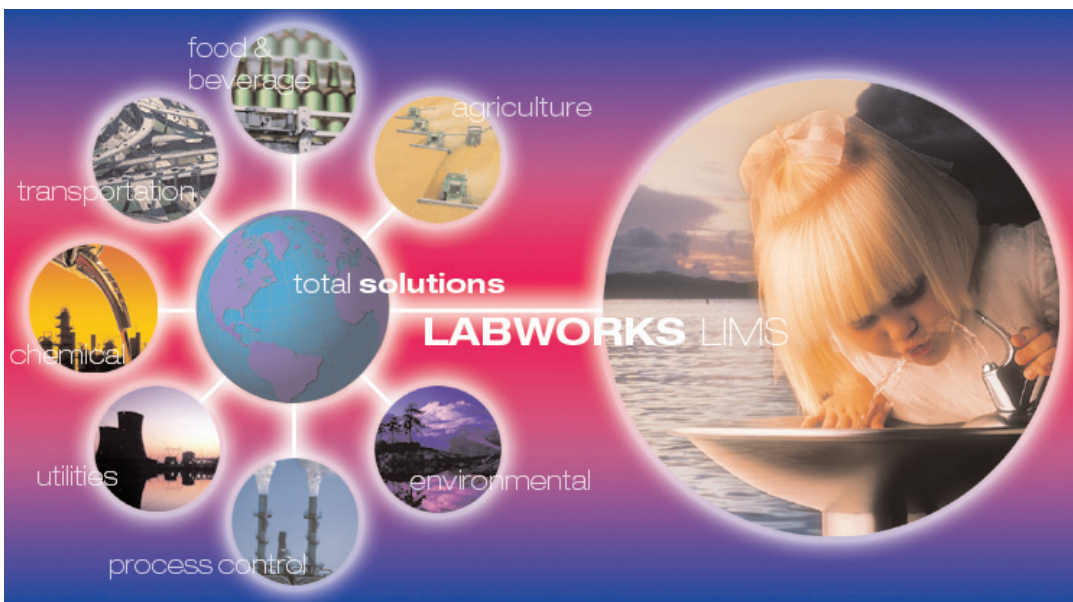


LABWORKS LIMS Solutions

Customer Service



LIMS Customer Service Helps Keep Water Treatment Labs Running

A high level of customer service provided by their laboratory information management (LIMS) software provider has helped two water treatment laboratories avoid interruptions to vital services. The industrial waste division of the Cincinnati Metro Sewer District was planning to switch to a different LIMS the following month when their old LIMS suddenly broke. Its developer asked for a large payment to patch it until the new system was installed. Instead, the new LIMS vendor immediately flew in a support engineer who, in only two days, got all the basic capabilities of the new software operating and generated reports from the old system's data.

"Our job of protecting the community against hazardous waste spills means we can't stop running for even a single day," said Jim Davis, Quality Assurance Manager for the Cincinnati Metro Sewer District. "I was completely floored by the way that LABWORKS dropped everything and rushed to our site to install their software in a fraction of the time that I had expected would be required."

The City of Fort Worth Water Department faced a similar if less dramatic situation when their wide area network crashed while their LIMS vendor was about to begin a critical software upgrade of a server at a remote location. Instead of throwing up his hands, the support engineer traveled to the data center to install the upgrade under cramped condi-

Key Features

- ▶ On-site Support
- ▶ LABWORKS ES Upgrade
- ▶ LW Support Packages
- ▶ Barcoding
- ▶ GPS Interface
- ▶ Instrument Interfacing
- ▶ Report Designer

tions, in the process developing custom scripts to accommodate an older database version running on the server.

"Our responsibility is to provide safe and reliable drinking water to our customers," said Ann M. Cruz, Information System Analyst for the City of Fort Worth Water Department. "We were faced with the urgent need to provide daily reports and LABWORKS responded quickly with the upgrade."

Two-day LIMS implementation

The industrial waste division of the Cincinnati Metro Sewer District is responsible for monitoring industrial discharges into streams, providing laboratory data to six treatment plants for their National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and for providing damage assessment used to guide the response in the event of a spill.

"We had outgrown our old LIMS system and selected LABWORKS because it offered the opportunity to get up and running with all of the capabilities that we need without requiring a costly and time-consuming customization process," Davis said. "We didn't realize that we would be putting these capabilities to the test even before our planned implementation date. A week before Christmas, while we were in the process of finalizing the contract for the new LIMS, the old LIMS system suddenly broke. We were faced with the urgent need to provide daily reports to our treatment plants and issue a monthly report to the Ohio EPA. We first called our old LIMS vendor to ask if they could fix the problem. They knew that we were planning to switch anyway so they quoted what seemed to be a very high price to come and repair their system.

Then we called LABWORKS and asked about moving up the implementation date. The very next day a support engineer was knocking on our door. He implemented a bridge

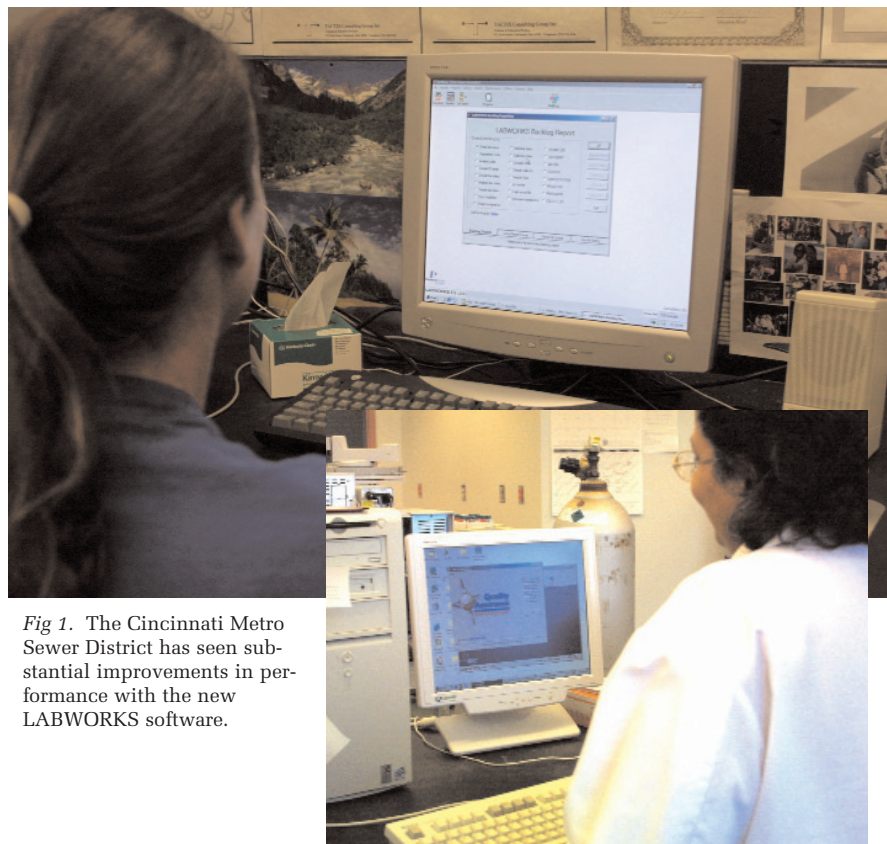


Fig 1. The Cincinnati Metro Sewer District has seen substantial improvements in performance with the new LABWORKS software.

system with just the features that we needed to get up and running and accomplish our objectives, saving many of the bells and whistles for later. He installed the version of the program that runs under Microsoft Access and connected it to our old database so we could generate reports that drew from the data contained in both systems. He also showed us how to create our own reports and enter clients into the system."

"By the time he left at the end of the next day," Davis continued, "we were fully operational and able to meet our commitments to our community and clients without interruption. The support engineer came back a few weeks later and spent a week installing the full-blown version of the software. He upgraded us to the more powerful Oracle database at this time. He also installed some of the instrument interfaces that automatically move the measurements from our ICPs, GC-MSs and flow injection instruments into the LIMS.

He set up the invoice module that automatically calculates the prices to our clients based on the type and number of analyses that were performed. He explained how to set up the software to automatically perform needed calculations, such as our statistical process control formulas.

We have seen substantial improvements in performance with the new software. In the past, at the end of the period when everyone was trying to enter data at the same time, the old LIMS system was almost unbearably slow. The new system always provides excellent response time. LABWORKS also makes it much easier to get at our data. Even our less computer literate users have no difficulty creating reports with the built-in report writer. And our more advanced users have a much wider range of options such as extracting data into Crystal Reports or Excel and creating sophisticated reports in the environment that they know best. Finally, Paul Dunlap at LABWORKS,

our support representative, has continued to deliver the same superlative service that we experienced from the very start. He is easy to reach and knows the system so well that he can solve most of our problems in a couple of minutes."

Upgrading under difficult circumstances

The City of Fort Worth Water Department plant has a 27-person centralized laboratory charged with ensuring the quality of drinking water provided to the city's residents. Ann Cruz, Information Systems Analyst, is responsible for LIMS administration. The LABWORKS software runs in a data center located in the basement of city hall and users at the laboratory access it through a T1 line.

"We lose our connection to the server from time to time when, for example, a backhoe working on a construction project accidentally cuts the cable," Cruz said. "Unfortunately, this happened at just the time when a support engineer arrived to install an update. I was expecting that he would beg off and delay the upgrade until we were able to get our network up and running. Instead, he asked if he could go downtown to the data center and do the upgrade there. I warned him that the data center was cramped and uncomfortable but he left immediately to get started.

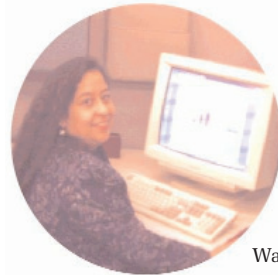
The update itself was difficult because we were running the older 7.0 version of the Microsoft SQL Server database which the latest version of LABWORKS no longer supports. But even that didn't faze him. He spent half a day rewriting the installation scripts so they would work on the older database. The upgrade was successful and we got up and running without incurring any additional expenses."

Cruz said that she has also found LABWORKS telephone support to be of the highest quality. "Once we had a problem where our error logs were getting jammed with messages although the software seemed to be

working just fine," she said. "I just emailed the error log file to Paul Dunlap and he emailed the solution back to me in a couple of hours. What happened was that a parameter that determined the size of the error logs had been set at too low a value.

I very much like the fact that we deal on a regular basis with just one support representative because he has developed an intimate familiarity with the way we use the software. That greatly reduces the time required to solve our problems. It's also very easy to reach Paul. I don't necessarily get him on the line when I call but he always gets back to me promptly. LABWORKS also provides a lot of useful information such as video and interactive training that makes it easy to become familiar with new features of the software."

The City of Fort Worth Water Department is currently in the process of implementing the geographic positioning system (GPS) capabilities of their LIMS. In the



Ann Cruz,
of the City of
Fort Worth
Water Department.

future, technicians will log in samples using handheld computers that contain a GPS receiver that automatically enters the latitude and longitude where the sample was taken along with the measurement results. The server keeps track of the coordinates of each sample collection point so it can check to be sure that the sample was taken at the correct point. The entry of field data with handheld computers will also eliminate what is now an additional data entry step. The city is in the process of using the LIMS to generate bar coded labels to update the status of the sample without data entry. Users can simply swipe it at the appropriate station, which also greatly

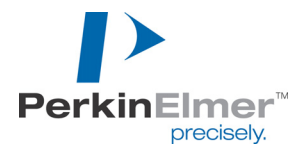
reduces the potential of errors.

"We swipe the bar code to log in the sample, put it into storage, assign it to an analyst, and take a measurement," Cruz concluded. "At every step of the way, the software tracks the chain of custody without any data entry which saves time and prevents errors. Our LIMS system is critical to the successful operation of this laboratory and the excellent service we receive helps keep it running smoothly."

For more information about PerkinElmer and LABWORKS, please visit the company's website at www.labworks.com or call 1.800.762.4060.

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