

CASE STUDY

LEADING BEVERAGE MANUFACTURER GETS SPARKLING TRAINING RESULTS WITH SISTEM®



Cott (NYSE-COT) is the world's largest retailer brand beverage company. The company, headquartered in Tampa, Florida, operates soft drink, juice, water and other beverage bottling facilities in the United States, Canada, Mexico and the United Kingdom. Cott sells beverage concentrates in more than 50 countries worldwide and supplies more than 200 retailer and licensed brands of beverages from 20 manufacturing facilities. The firm has approximately 4,000 employees.

The company's carbonated soft drink (CSD) division purchased the SISTEM® Training and Compliance Management Platform from Alchemy Systems in 2010. Cott's juice division had been training with SISTEM for nearly five years. The corporation sought to standardize and improve training, comprehension, safety and job performance with the SISTEM platform.

Summary of Circumstances

Cott recognized that their training was inconsistent and tended to vary within each plant department. The same was true from plant to plant since there was no standardization of training protocols across the facilities. While some facilities did have more effective training and tests to validate understanding and applications, others accepted knowledge of standard operating procedures as sufficient. Validation of worker comprehension and specific understanding of training lessons was minimal and inconsistent between the CSD and Juice divisions.

With worker compensation costs increasing, the company recognized the need for change. Management determined that improved training was one of the most important steps the company could take to reduce the number of on-the-job injuries, as well as lower the worker compensation costs associated with those injuries. The company acknowledged the need for an accurate assessment of all aspects of training including lesson plans, instruction, testing and validation of comprehension if it hoped to improve its culture of food and worker safety.

Challenges Facing the Company

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing Cott Beverages was integrating training for the two divisions, since both were using different IT infrastructures and business systems. It was important



for the two groups to be aligned so that training could be consistent and verifiable through a common set of standards. "It's impossible to get to the next level if you don't know where you are with training," said Sandy Holmes, Cott corporate training manager.

One underlying reason for the disparity was the insufficiency of training documentation, an issue that needed to be rectified in light of Cott's goal to achieve Safe Quality Food (SQF) certification, a benchmark for meeting Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) standards. SQF certification sets specific requirements for aspects of training including documentation and implementation, comprehension, and validation. Holmes said that the variation in training protocols within the departments and plants would have to be completely aligned and be more thorough to meet SQF and GFSI requirements.



To accomplish that goal, it was important to include verification of comprehension during the onboarding process. Holmes said that under Cott’s previous training system, there was no proof that employees completely understood critical workplace and food safety training. Further, there was less certainty within the divisions, particularly CSD, of the effectiveness of the training program. “We clearly needed a new learning management system (LMS),” she said.

Choosing SISTEM

Holmes knew immediately what was needed to get employees involved and committed to a successful training program. “We wanted learning to be fun and interactive,” Holmes said, and it was that necessity that led Cott to Alchemy and its SISTEM training platform. “This was the best source of training out there that I was involved with because it made training fun and people wanted to train with it,” Holmes said.

Holmes added that she was impressed by another facet of the SISTEM platform capability, in which existing Cott training and testing material could be included in the platform, thus reducing time and effort for establishing testing parameters and grading results. Holmes said SISTEM enables the company to pull reports immediately for determining worker progress, test results, and comprehension of the various food and plant safety concepts.

In addition to SISTEM’s interactivity and entertainment value while learning, the platform’s numerous capabilities were easily adapted to Cott’s needs. These included:

- ✓ **Training content in multiple languages.** Cott facilities have a language-diverse workforce, and SISTEM’s ability to provide consistent training in multiple languages helps assure worker understanding of training, concepts and on-the-job product and workplace safety.
- ✓ **Implementation of testing and evaluations with company-specific content.** SISTEM technology contains dynamic testing tools to assure that comprehension

is based upon plant-specific material rather than a “canned” program that may contain material irrelevant to the job site. At the same time, Cott and other companies that use the SISTEM platform can promptly upload and disseminate new company or job specific material across the user base.

- ✓ **Electronic documentation and archiving.** SISTEM contains a technologically-advanced learning management system with modules for lesson plans, records of training events, automated and automatic testing documentation and instant download of training reports. These records are essential for companies needing proof of comprehension for third-party audits. With SISTEM, all documents are in compliance and easily accessible. Accurate documentation was one of the most important requirements for Cott to enable regulatory compliance and to drive improvements in food safety and workplace safety culture.

The Rollout

The plan for rolling out the SISTEM platform was first presented to Cott’s operating management team, which assumed ultimate responsibility for successful implementation and set the direction for the entire organization. Team members then took the presentation to the plant level and assigned responsibilities. These included purchasing, timing of each plant’s rollout, identifying employees for specific training and setting different levels of authorization for SISTEM facilitators. Human resource managers and each plant’s management team who were trained on SISTEM learned how to drive training successfully to the front lines by leveraging the platform’s numerous capabilities.

SISTEM’s rollout began at Cott’s Juice plant in Dunkirk, New York and CSD headquarters in Tampa, Florida where Holmes served as project manager. “I had experience with SISTEM so I knew how to overcome any problems that might arise,” Holmes said, describing the rollout as smooth and emphasizing the acceptance of SISTEM by management and employees. “When they learned how much time SISTEM saved and how easy it was to learn, it sold itself,” Holmes said.



“I found the rollout to be very easy,” said Lori Laubach, human resources manager at Cott’s CSD plant in Wilson, North Carolina. “In addition to our internal presentations, we had excellent support from Alchemy who was with us at every

step.” Laubach said that Alchemy hosted a number of web-based conferences and on-site visits to help Cott move from implementation to full utilization of SISTEM.

Holmes said the rollout process was so successful that it became a best practice. She said an ongoing communications process in the form of weekly meetings involving management, team leaders and employees was critical to success of the rollout. She noted that the process works best with a project manager who understands company expectations and effectively communicates them. As part of Cott’s best practices, managers take ownership of training and are reviewed on performance.

Planning is electronic, as SISTEM automates training for such departments as Human Resources and Quality Assurance in the form of lesson plans and learning schedules developed monthly for an entire year, and to assure that nothing is overlooked, the platform electronically issues monthly reminders. The reminders help drive training activity and compliance with SQF and OSHA regulations. Each work site can copy lesson plans and add specialized material thanks to SISTEM’s capacity for plant-specific content. Project managers are authorized to modify learning plans to ensure that specific plant and department needs are addressed.

Positive Results

Holmes and Laubach say that SISTEM’s performance has easily exceeded their expectations. Laubach cited one example—“a rigorous ethical sourcing audit” conducted for a customer in December 2011. “Not only were the auditors pleased with the content and the classes, but very complimentary of the compliance material, all of which were provided through SISTEM,” Laubach said. “We got very high marks and it’s the toughest ethical sourcing audit I’ve ever been through.”

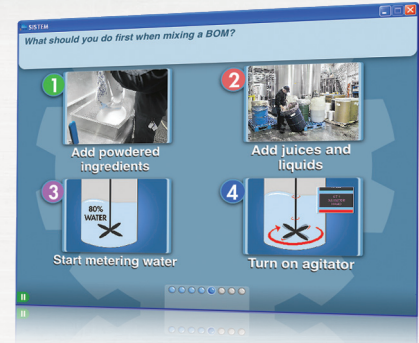


Holmes said there is no doubt that SISTEM was the major factor behind a recent result in the training portion of another audit. “We earned the highest score possible,” she said, adding that the score had never been achieved prior to the implementation of SISTEM.

Holmes said that training has vastly improved under SISTEM, and she has no

doubt that it is a contributing factor to the reduction of accidents, incidents and worker compensation claims at Cott.

“When people leave onboarding and enter the production floor, their knowledge is significantly higher than before we had SISTEM,” she said. Another positive benefit according to Holmes: turnover has been substantially reduced.



One of the goals prior to the launch of SISTEM in CSD was standardization of training, and Holmes and Laubach say that goal has been achieved. “All plants are getting the same message and that’s something we didn’t have,” Holmes said.

The two also praise the technical support, which they describe as ongoing and ever present. “I have previously worked in software and I’ve been fiercely critical of other vendors, but not Alchemy,” Laubach said. “I have nothing but good things to say about the company, products and support—they’re marvelous.”

In assessing the rollout and subsequent positive results, Holmes emphasized the importance of management buy-in, communications, and understanding of expectations in integrating SISTEM in the two divisions along with the platform’s capability of engaging and training workers at the same time.

“It’s working really well and I love it,” the training manager said.

About Alchemy

Alchemy is dedicated to providing innovative training products that use technology and media to educate the global workforce. Our award-winning training products enable companies to effectively deliver, document, and manage personnel training. Most importantly, we help solve the training challenges most companies face when balancing production demands with increasingly strict regulatory requirements. For more information please email us at contactus@alchemy systems.com or visit www.alchemy systems.com.