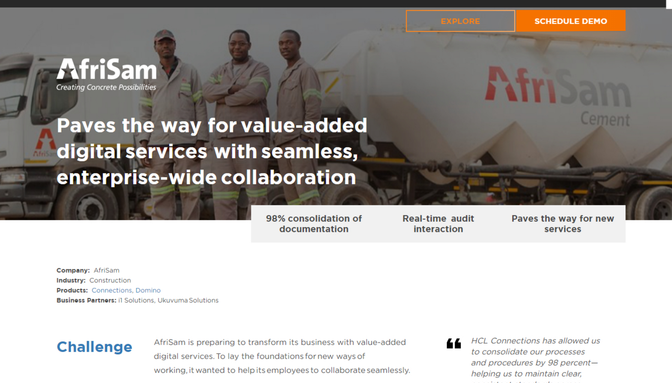

Paves the way for value-added digital services with seamless, enterprise-wide collaboration

98% consolidation of documentation

Real-time audit interaction

Paves the way for new services

Company: AfriSam
Industry: Construction
Products: Connections, Domino
Business Partners: i1 Solutions, Ukuvuma Solutions

Challenge

AfriSam is preparing to transform its business with value-added digital services. To lay the foundations for new ways of working, it wanted to help its employees to collaborate seamlessly.

Solution

AfriSam rolled out a top-down, bottom-up communications strategy, supported by HCL Connections—empowering its people to work together across geographical boundaries.

Results

Today, AfriSam employees drive key processes such as meetings, audits and risk assessments in HCL Connections, building a collaborative digital culture that will support innovative customer services.

> *HCL Connections has allowed us to consolidate our processes and procedures by 98 percent—helping us to maintain clear, consistent standards across AfriSam.*
>
> **—Lucy Montague**
> IS Portfolio & Applications Manager
> AfriSam

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Targeting market leadership

By 2050, more than half of Africans are expected to live in cities, and as urbanization gathers pace across the continent, businesses in the crowded construction materials industry face fierce competition for customer loyalty.

AfriSam, a leading supplier of construction materials in Southern Africa, realized that value-added services would be essential to grow its share and become the supplier of choice for customers in new markets.

Lucy Montague, IS Portfolio & Non-SAP Applications Manager, AfriSam, begins: "We serve customers ranging from DIY enthusiasts to large construction companies across South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Tanzania, and our mission is to help our customers build a better society with superior construction material solutions.

"Across Africa, the booming popularity of smartphones and the expansion of mobile internet services is set to transform the way that customers browse, compare and purchase. We saw an opportunity to build digital services that would set us apart from our competitors—enabling customers to request quotes, place orders and track deliveries online."

In the past, AfriSam relied on paper- and email-based processes to drive its business. As a first step in its services transformation, AfriSam needed to lay the foundation for the new way of working.

"Our reliance on email, paper and phone calls consumed a large amount of time and resources," Montague explains. "For example, every year we run an audit to renew our ISO 9001 certification—a prerequisite for bidding on major construction and engineering projects. Because it was difficult for our people to capture the information they needed, performing the required internal auditing tasks could take as long as six months, and the same time again to prepare the report."

She continues: "Paper-based processes also made it difficult to ensure that all of our different business units were following best practices. In total, we had more than 25,700 documents relating to policies, procedures and working instructions across the business, which made it easy for multiple versions of the truth to co-exist. Documenting processes in this way also limited our ability to adapt quickly. To ensure we had the agility to compete successfully, we wanted to empower our people to work together in a seamless, agile way."

Driving a digital transformation

AfriSam decided to augment its existing HCL Notes® and HCL Domino® solution for email and calendaring with a business social network based on HCL Connections—bringing together email, task management, instant messaging, file sharing and collaborative document editing on a single platform.

Montague recalls: "We initially considered Microsoft SharePoint, as I had experience deploying the platform in other companies. However, when we compared the Microsoft solution with the HCL offering, we felt that the collaboration capabilities in Connections were a better fit for our specific business requirements."

To put its digital strategy into action, AfriSam engaged HCL Platinum Business Partner i1 Solutions to shape collaborative workflows for key business processes such as ISO 9001 auditing using HCL Connections and HCL LEAP.

"i1 Solutions provided us with the expert resources we needed to ensure our project was a success; and their consultants really went the extra mile for us," Montague comments. "Because our collaboration solution is the foundation for other initiatives in our business transformation program, we were working to a tight deadline—and the i1 Solutions team worked with us day and night to get us across the finish line in time."

The company also worked with HCL Business Partner Ukuvuma Solutions to implement the custom-built collaboration solution.

Today, AfriSam has rolled out HCL Connections to 1,011 users across the business. And to engage employees with the change process, AfriSam developed a new top-down, bottom-up communications strategy called the AfriSam Way.

We wanted to build a centralized digital workspace for all of our employees, and thanks to our HCL solutions and the AfriSam Way, that's exactly what we have achieved," says Montague. "The minutes of all of our meetings—whether they take place virtually or face-to-face—are now captured in HCL Connections, as well as all of our documentation on policies and procedures.

"Since we embraced a social business approach, measuring and maintaining ISO standards has become a part of daily life. In fact, during our most recent gap analysis, our auditors went out of the way to comment on the positive difference that using HCL Connections to track actions and accountabilities has made."

> *Looking to the future, we see that becoming a digital business will be key to differentiate ourselves in a competitive market. Thanks to our new communications strategy and HCL Connections, we are building the foundational capabilities we need to support innovative services.*
>
> **—Lucy Montague**
> IS Portfolio & Applications Manager
> AfriSam

Laying the foundation for value-added services

With a business social network supporting its operations across Southern Africa, AfriSam is building the agile, digital culture it needs to surge ahead with its customer services transformation.

"In the past, closing down issues identified during an audit could take months—but today, that's all changed," explains Montague. "Any items we identify in a meeting or an internal audit go into an audit community in HCL Connections as an activity. We allocate these activities to the relevant line managers, who typically upload the evidence required to resolve the items in a matter of hours. Thanks to the increased visibility that HCL Connections offers us, we've already closed down several audit items this year and we've been able to reduce the number of documents in circulation from 25,700 to 4,700.

She adds: "The HCL solution is also helping us to break down the barrier between enterprise risk management and the business. We recently created a self-auditing workflow using HCL LEAP, with Ukuvuma Solutions' Agility Integration Portal and HCL Domino Designer XPages to automatically transform the reported audit items into HCL Connections activities. We have significantly reduced our workload per year—freeing our people to focus on value-added activities."

With a single source of truth for procedures and policy documentation in HCL Connections, AfriSam is helping to ensure that all its business units are following best practices.

"In the past, the combination of limited communication between departments and paper-based processes meant that there was always a risk that different parts of the business were following different approaches to procedures such as recruitment," comments Montague. "In the process of digitizing our documentation and migrating it to HCL Connections, we were able to consolidate our processes and procedures by 98 percent—helping us to maintain clear, consistent standards across AfriSam."

With an enterprise-class collaboration platform at the heart of its business, AfriSam is preparing to launch innovative value-added services to support its business growth.

"When we first embarked on our transformation process, we had a clear goal: that the technology should fade into the background," says Montague. "Today, that's exactly what's happening. If one of our managers is standing in the control room of a manufacturing plant, they can respond to a message on their mobile device then and there. Our people increasingly start work with morning meetings in HCL Connections—it's becoming the first place they visit to plan their days."

She concludes: "Looking to the future, we see that becoming a digital business will be key to differentiate ourselves in a competitive market. Thanks to our new communications strategy and HCL Connections, we are building the foundational capabilities we need to support innovative services."

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About the company

Founded in 1934 and headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa, AfriSam is a leading supplier of quality construction materials, including cement, ready-mix concrete and aggregate materials. The company serves customers in countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, including Lesotho, Tanzania, Botswana and Swaziland.

DOWNLOAD STORY

To learn more about HCL Connections and HCL Domino, please contact your HCL representative or HCL Business Partner, or submit an inquiry.

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