Making Aras Innovator
What You Want It to Be:
Imperial Brands' PLM Transformation
Founded in 1901, Imperial Brands is the fourth largest international tobacco company worldwide, operating in over 100 markets with approximately 26,000 employees globally. Imperial Brands have a wide portfolio of brands ranging from classical tobacco products in cigarettes and cigars and fine cut tobacco with brands such as West Davidoff, Gauloises, and John Player Special in Europe and in the US brands such as Kool, Winston and Maverick. More recently, the organization has pivoted and built out a wide portfolio of next generation smoke-free products in the e-vapor category with Blu, in the heated tobacco category with Pulze, and in the oral tobacco category with Zone X. Through a rich history of acquisition and the more recent introduction of new smoke-free alternatives, this has led to Imperial having a complex product portfolio and a rise in process complexity, from new product requirements to the realization of these new products whilst always ensuring that Imperial’s products are fully compliant.

**Background**

Imperial Brands sought to enhance its operations by implementing a comprehensive Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) solution. This led their PLM Team across the Global Supply Chain and Global IT to embrace the Aras PLM platform, Aras Innovator, to overcome systems and collaboration challenges to transform their business on a global scale.
CHALLENGES

Difficulty Driving Efficiency and Productivity

Imperial Brands encountered challenges arising from a highly fragmented product lifecycle system landscape prior to the implementation of the Aras PLM platform. Various teams and departments within the organization operated by utilizing different and disconnected tools and systems for specific processes and data sets. This lack of integration impeded collaboration and coherence in end-to-end processes, posing difficulties in driving efficiency and productivity.

Keeping Pace with Evolving Regulations

Operating in over 100 markets globally, a particularly difficult challenge faced by Imperial Brands was in the form of regulatory changes and tax increases that they must abide by to remain compliant in these markets. Coupled with the fact their products are heavily regulated, they also have a very short lifecycle, only nine months from when they are developed through to maturity and eventually when they decline and are de-listed. Through this product lifecycle the global specification teams make, on average, 30,000 changes to product specifications each year, either by creating new specifications or maintaining running specifications in production.

As a result of this enormous data generation, and the requirement to stay compliant with the varied regulations around the world, the team faced a challenge that could only be solved by a comprehensive overhaul of their PLM system as well as how they approach and fundamentally think about product lifecycle management.
SOLUTION

Harnessing Workflow Capabilities

The Aras PLM platform, with its feature-rich applications, presented a viable solution for Imperial Brands to overcome their fragmented systems and collaboration challenges. Imperial Brand’s PLM Teams recognized the power of workflows within the Aras platform as a fundamental driver of process streamlining and connectivity.

By leveraging the platform’s workflow capabilities as well as partnering with Tata Consultancy Services, an established Aras partner with a proven track record of Aras Innovation implementations, Imperial Brands were able to build a holistic end-to-end PLM solution. Through utilization of the Aras platform, Imperial were able to seamlessly drive processes across departments, connect workflows, and create a coherent end-to-end approach from local market initiative through to compliance reporting. The workflows allowed for efficient data transfer between tasks and teams, ensuring work packages reached the right individuals at the appropriate time, aligning with the underlying business processes.

“The Aras platform revolutionized our approach to collaboration and process streamlining. Its powerful workflow capabilities enabled us to connect our fragmented systems and establish a seamless end-to-end approach, driving efficiency and productivity.”

David Everson, Senior Manager PLM Process and Systems, Imperial Brands
BIG BANG GO-LIVE: GAINING MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Imperial Brands embarked on a significant implementation effort over the course of 4.5 years, culminating in a global go-live which impacted over 20 manufacturing sites. To gain management support for this ambitious endeavor, the PLM Teams, together with expert views from Tata Consultancy Services, focused on providing a comprehensive analysis of the available options and associated risks to the business.

Their proposal highlighted the advantages of a Big Bang Go-Live approach. By deploying the platform comprehensively in one go, Imperial Brands aimed to minimize disruption to their operations, ensure that Imperial Brands safeguarded the legal obligation of reporting to regulators and reduce the risk of non-compliance. The interdependency between their Bill of Materials data, compliance processes, and production locations across the globe further justified the need for a unified implementation.

“The Big Bang Go-Live approach was crucial for our PLM transformation. It allowed us to minimize disruption, gain management support, and establish a unified implementation that addressed the interdependency of our processes across the globe.”

- David Everson
ENABLING UNIQUE CUSTOMIZATION

Imperial Brands realized that one of the key strengths of the Aras platform lay in its customization capabilities. The PLM Team built numerous custom applications to address specific business needs on top of the out-of-the-box functionalities already provided by the platform.

This customization allowed Imperial Brands to tailor the applications to their unique ways of working, ensuring the system aligned with their business requirements and business process. Unlike other PLM solutions that imposed rigid frameworks, the Aras platform empowered Imperial Brands to mimic their existing business processes, rather than forcing them to adapt to pre-defined application-defined workflows.

“You can really make it what you want. You have the standard out of the box functionality, you can take that as it comes or you can customize on top of this functionality as well,” said David Everson. This allowed Imperial Brands to create numerous customizations to fit the different unique applications for Imperial Brand’s cross collaboration needs. He continued, “fulfill your business requirements from multiple disciplines in one application, and you can still know that you have the fundamental underpinning product lifecycle management functionality working in the background such as workflow tracking history tracking, strong revisioning logic, and extensive levels of traceability which you may need in your organization to be effectively managing the product lifecycle.”
POWERING FUTURE GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

The PLM transformation journey empowered Imperial Brands to embark on further digitalization and modernization efforts across their organization and supply chain. By utilizing the Aras platform, they were able to maintain exceptional data quality, a crucial aspect for upcoming end-to-end global supply chain digitalization programs. The flexibility and customization offered by the Aras platform opened doors for Imperial Brands to explore additional applications beyond the traditional product lifecycle management scope. Furthermore, Imperial Brands discovered ways to leverage the existing data within the platform, eliminating the need for separate applications and streamlining their overall operations, such as utilizing the Aras platform to store data relating to their Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) agenda, as well as actions plans and risk assessments for ESG.

LOOKING AHEAD

Imperial Brands’ PLM Team successfully implemented the Aras platform to address their fragmented systems, enhance collaboration, and streamline their end-to-end processes. By embracing the platform’s workflow capabilities and customization, they achieved significant improvements in efficiency, productivity, and data quality, setting the stage for future growth and transformation.

“The Aras platform has been instrumental in our PLM transformation, enabling us to streamline processes, enhance collaboration, and lay the foundation for future digitalization efforts. Its flexibility and customization capabilities have truly revolutionized our ways of working.”
- David Everson

Imperial Brands intends to leverage the Aras PLM platform to meet future business needs and challenges. With a focus on compliance, channel changes, and broader digital transformations, they envision further enrichment of their product lifecycle management processes and the utilization of innovative PLM functionalities.
Aras provides the most powerful low-code platform with applications to design, build, and operate complex products. Our technology enables the rapid delivery of flexible, upgradeable solutions that build business resilience. Aras’ platform and product lifecycle management applications connect users in all disciplines and functions to critical product data and processes across the lifecycle and throughout the extended supply chain. Airbus, Audi, DENSO, Honda, Kawasaki, Microsoft, Mitsubishi, and Nissan are using the platform to manage complex change and traceability. Visit www.aras.com to learn more and follow us on Twitter and LinkedIn.