

## Case study

### QMS helps construction firm to beat recession



PIPELINE & DRAINAGE SYSTEMS PLC  
DEVELOPING PIPELINE & DRAINAGE SOLUTIONS



#### About PDS

Over the last nine years PDS has become a recognised market leader in bridge, kerb and channel drainage in the UK. Sales are currently growing at 30% per year and the company's original ductile iron bridge drainage system, Hydrodeck, can now be found in many major bridge projects such as the M6 toll road in the UK, the M50 in Dublin and projects in Singapore and Bahrain.

Envirokerb is the only recycled lightweight kerb drainage system available anywhere in the world. Envirodeck is a lightweight composite bridge drainage system which has virtually replaced the company's Hydrodeck product as the market leader.

#### The numbers

PDS was formed in 2000

18 UK staff employed across two sites in Wakefield and Manchester

Three partner production / manufacturing plants in UK and China

Over 200,000 units sold every year

Working relationship with LRQA started in 2007

Website: [www.pds-plc.com](http://www.pds-plc.com)

#### Standards achieved

ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management Standard (Sept 2008)

89/106/EEC Construction Products Directive to EN 1433:2002

Despite a recession in the construction industry, Pipeline & Drainage Systems (PDS) Plc has grown while others have suffered. Much of this success has been directly attributed to a range of Business Assurance services provided by LRQA.

#### Business Assurance at PDS

The quality management system (QMS) at Yorkshire-based PDS has become increasingly important as the company and its client base have continued to grow. At an early stage in the company's development PDS employed a local supplier of certification services. However, as PDS grew the company realised the importance of having a credible, internationally respected, quality assurance partner to ensure commonality in all of the company's business systems in every location.

#### ISO 9001 in action

As part of the ISO 9001 assessment procedures, LRQA thoroughly audited the efficiency of every facet of PDS's business operation. PDS has been pleased to note that the LRQA assessments have been extremely rigorous, particularly in comparison with the certification company that was previously engaged. For example, it is vitally important that the PDS products comply with specifications, so the LRQA team helped identify good quality test facilities for the two manufacturing locations in China. Regular visits by the LRQA assessors in China provide management staff at the UK head office with continual surveillance and a high level of confidence in the manufacturing plants. In addition to the work that LRQA undertakes internally at PDS, the assessors also conduct a gap analysis, under the ISO 9001 standard, on any new sub-contract manufacturers. This process involves an analysis of the prospective party's QMS in comparison with the PDS requirements. Areas requiring improvement are identified and plans to achieve specific measurable targets are enacted.

### Why LRQA

PDS first contacted LRQA looking for help with problems that were being experienced with a standard (EN 1433 Drainage channels for vehicular and pedestrian areas) within the Construction Products Directive 89/106/EEC for construction products. This was a vitally important issue for the company because compliance was a specific requirement of the UK Highways Agency.

Following an initial assessment, it became clear to the LRQA team that it would be necessary to seek changes to the specific guidance issued by the Highways Agency Specifications & Standards Policy Team.

So LRQA provided experts to meet with the Highways Agency and as a result, the Interim Advice Note was amended.

LRQA's assessment helped PDS implement streamlined quality management systems in all areas of the business, which resulted in the achievement of ISO 9001 in addition to the European CE mark for its products.

According to PDS Managing Director and founder, Chris Rothery, "LRQA met stringent criteria when it came to selecting a credible, independent assurance services provider. Their ability to drill down to the key issues and then help us to implement a strategy to deal with them was truly visionary. This experience made us realise that when it came to assuring our business, we needed more than just certificates."

"We manufacture in the UK and overseas, so it became clear that our QMS must be equally effective in every country if it is to succeed. As a global organisation with extensive local reach, LRQA was therefore the perfect partner to help us achieve our global objectives."

## Benefits of ISO 9001

LRQA certification to ISO 9001 coupled with an ongoing relationship with LRQA has generated a wealth of benefits for PDS:

### 1. New markets

Compliance with a range of quality standards, such as the CE mark, is a pre-requisite for many major clients, so PDS has been able to secure new business with the UK Highways Agency, local authorities and customers in Italy, Germany, Spain and the Czech Republic.



### 2. Less wastage

Improved quality control procedures have substantially reduced the levels of rejected stock and wastage during manufacture.

### 3. Improved efficiency

LRQA's Business Assurance assessments have delivered improvements in the production and manufacturing process which have helped to reduce costs.

### 4. Reliable deliveries

As the business has grown, it has become increasingly necessary to establish a significant level of stock in the UK in order to maintain good delivery times to customers. However, prior to the implementation of the QMS, the rejection of a shipment to the UK from a manufacturing plant in China would have incurred an eight week delay. Now that the QMS is in place, improved product quality has substantially improved the reliability of product lead times.

### 5. Increased sales

The benefits outlined above have culminated in a 30% increase in annual revenue – no small achievement during a recession!

## Working with LRQA

Chris Rothery believes that working with LRQA has radically improved his business. "With LRQA's help, we have established a suite of business systems that are focused on efficiency and product quality. These systems are regularly assessed to ensure that we are using the same systems in every part of the business and that we continuously seek to improve them," he explained.

Commenting on the LRQA staff, Chris says, "They are impartial, experienced, and a pleasure to work with, but importantly, they are highly knowledgeable in areas such as the Construction Products Directive, CE marking and product certification, which has been an immense help in gaining competitive advantage."

## What next?

Following successful ISO 9001 certification, PDS is currently in the process of obtaining ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems (EMS) certification with LRQA. The PDS product range already features a number of environmental benefits (low weight/reduced transport, sustainable materials etc.) so the pursuit of ISO 14001 is a logical step for the company and formed part of LRQA's remit from the outset. Chris Rothery explains: "Our aim has been to create harmonisation across all of our processes. We also hope, with sustainability becoming a major driver in the construction sector, that ISO 14001 will help us to improve our environmental performance and open new markets."

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**Chris Rothery**, PDS Managing Director and founder.