RelyOn Nutec
360° Safety

White Paper
Control of work

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Control of Work
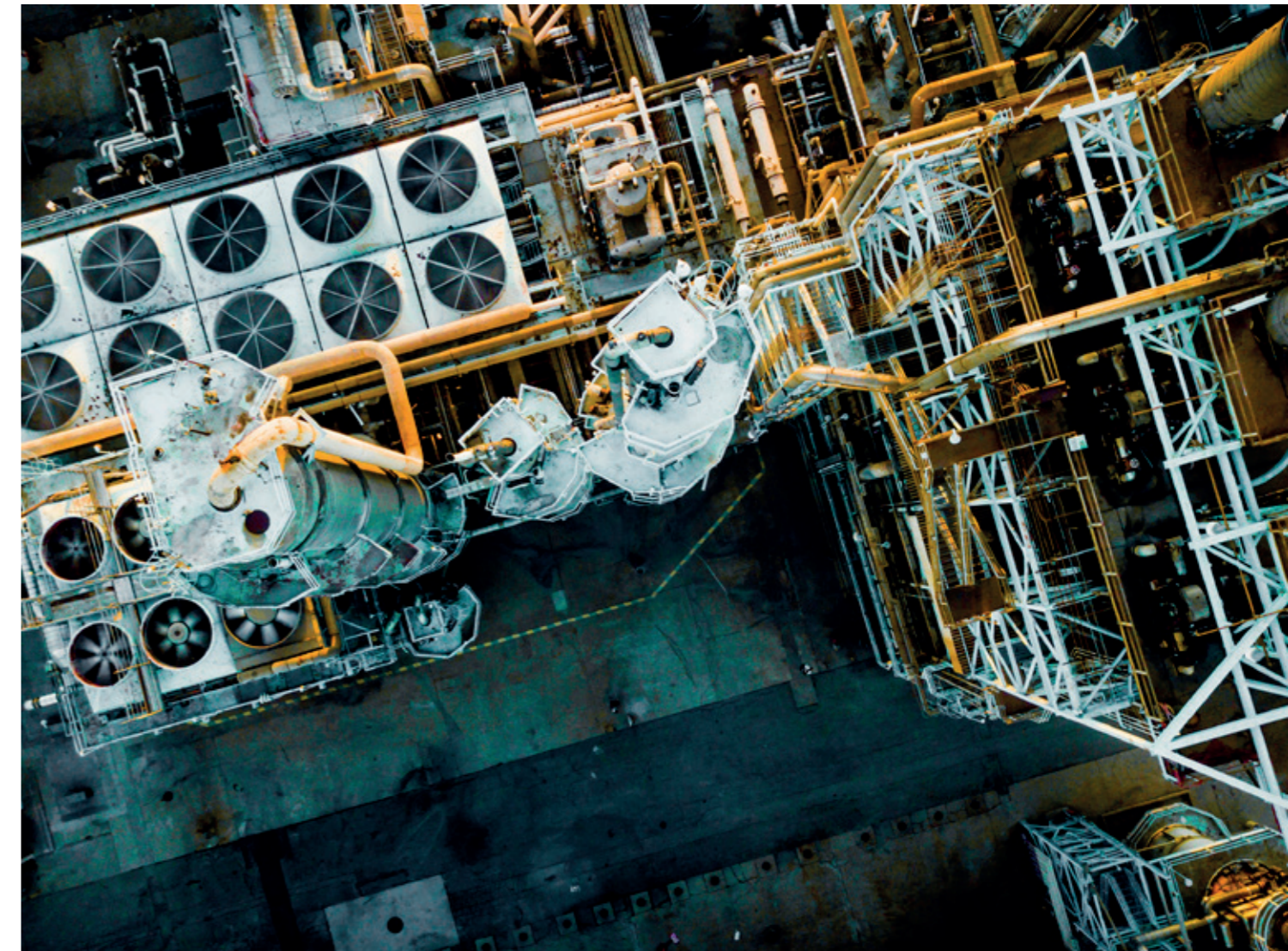
The digitalisation of paper-based Control of Work (CoW) systems has been progressing for decades, and with the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the progress has accelerated significantly.

As part of the overall trend of digital transformations, organisations are increasingly looking for alternatives to expensive, inflexible and time-consuming paper-based systems, that are less efficient and more prone to error than digital systems.

"A Control of Work system is the glue that holds work control procedures together"

The term **"Control of Work"** has many different meanings depending on the industry and the individual organisations, and could cover everything from the specific systems and software, to work procedures, risk assessments, documentation and standards needed to work safely.

A digital CoW system is a piece of software that handles some or all of the areas mentioned before, aligning the work processes with the controls, ensuring standards are met and all activities are documented.

Generally speaking, there are a few core areas that a good CoW system should cover:

Work planning:
• All procedures to be carried out are to be stored in the system.
• The system is capable of identifying all necessary roles and their area of responsibility.
• Assigning people to tasks, and the system checks that they have the necessary competences needed to carry out the work.
• Capable of planning the work through a digital map of the job site, flagging any potential risks from other tasks carried out nearby.

Hazard identification and risk assessment:
• The system enables quick and easy risk assessments, for example, through pre-made lists of hazards, partially pre-filled forms, etc.
• That all hazard identification and risk assessments follow the programmed procedure and that the system has measures in place to ensure that.
• The task to be carried out, the hazards, controls and mitigations are easily communicated to all parties involved.

"A CoW system helps companies keep their people, assets and environment safe; and aids in managing daily operations in an effective and efficient manner"

Permit to work:
• Open permits are clearly displayed, allowing for easy monitoring and management of the work being carried out.
• Alerts and notifications inform the work coordinator of permits expiring, and the coordinator can add more time if needed.
• Helps ensure that the job site is left in a safe condition after the task has been carried out.

Isolation management:
• Well-described isolation schemes, incl. blueprints, maps, process descriptions etc.

These modules guide users through a clear and easy-to-follow process that can be configured to match your industry and/or regulatory needs.

The modules support the overarching goals of a CoW system: help companies keep their people, assets and environment safe; and aid in managing the daily operation in an effective and efficient manner.

Why go digital?

By choosing to implement a digital CoW system, it stands to reason that it is somehow superior or will deliver additional value than the current paper-based system in use.

So, what are the main shortcomings of paper-based CoW systems, and what can a digital system offer instead?

- **Reduce human error** - human errors can never be eliminated but a well-designed system can lower the risk of errors occurring. Paper-based systems are more susceptible to human error as they are manually filled out, stored and distributed. Paper-based systems have a risk of:
  - Papers being misplaced during work or being damaged
  - Data being logged incorrectly or of poor handwriting resulting in misunderstandings
  - Forms only being filled out partially and not giving sufficient information
  - Not listing or recognising all potential hazards
  - Employees unable to fill out paper forms due to time or other restrictions
  - Errors being introduced in the process as there is no revision history

Digital solutions minimise the risks above by having automated workflows and mandatory fields and steps to be completed, and by continuously storing information throughout the workday.

- **Efficiency** - from manually filling out papers, to identifying all potential hazards and walking around and getting signatures from multiple people, an employee spends a lot of time doing procedural work. Mobile devices set up with a digital CoW system increase efficiency by allowing users to access digital procedures, checklists and permits immediately in any location, thereby increasing productivity and safety.

• **Overview and clarity** - paper permits stored in shelves and binders do not provide a simple overview of all the work being performed on the entire facility at any given time. Maps with markers are currently in use in many places, and suffer the same risks as is the case with human error. Additionally, a paper-based system has no "search" function and the required information can be difficult to locate.
A digital system provides users with real-time access to documents and maps, to help identify potential conflicts on the work floor, track tools and people, all leading to a safer workplace.

• **Flexibility** - changes in the daily operation mean changes to the content of permits and procedures. Paper-based systems do not lend themselves to fast changes, and any change slows down productivity as new documents are created, approved, distributed and signed off. Additionally, you run the risk of having multiple versions existing at the same time. This can lead to confusion, misunderstandings and ultimately accidents.

Digital solutions avoid the confusion and risks, by giving the users the ability to immediately change, review and approve vital documents (permits, schedules, risk assessments) in any location at any time from any tablet/PC/phone).

• **Audit trail** - minor changes might not get logged properly; forms risk being signed off improperly. In an event of an accident this information can be used to prevent similar incidents in future.
Digital systems allow for a much more detailed audit trail as all interactions are easily accessible through a digital search and are invaluable in demonstrating compliance during internal or external audits.

• **Data analytics** - paper-based systems do not meet the current data and reporting needs of many companies. Manually inputting and categorising data are a time-consuming and repetitive task that often gets neglected due to the sheer time commitment.
Automating the data collection and reporting is one of the unique benefits of a digital CoW system. Having an accurate and updated dataset helps identify areas of increased risk, areas of improvement and waste, all helping to increase safety and allocate resources to the right places.
The full process and data overview, makes it easier to produce reports for partners, safety regulators and management..

In short, a digital CoW system does a better job of:
• Reducing the risks caused by human error
• Improving productivity through procedural and operational efficiencies
• Creating overview and providing the right information at the right time
• Facilitating flexibility in the daily operation
• Registering all activities for auditing purposes
• Centralising data for analysis and creating valuable business insights

Which CoW system is the right one for you?

Picking the right system can be tough, as the digital landscape is vast and applications can be difficult to evaluate up front without prior knowledge and use of the system.

Do you prefer a niche-focused piece of software with very specific functionalities in a limited area, or a broader-based system covering multiple areas with the potential to replace multiple pieces of software?

The broader digital trends point towards the latter as companies are continuously looking for places to reduce cost and simplify their digital setup, while driving operational efficiencies.

We recommend that you take the following into consideration when choosing a new system.

"A digital CoW system should reduce human errors, increase efficiency and provide overview and clarity"

• **Requirements** - we outlined the 4 major modules that a good CoW system needs to have, but you may have more industry or specific regulatory needs. The selected system should be configurable to your needs, able to meet current as well as future needs. Make a prioritised list of required functionalities to compare with your prospective CoW systems.

• **Ease of use** - change is never easy and choosing a system with a steep learning curve increases the risks of adoption failure. Your digital system should be mobile, intuitive and easy to use, have a simple user interface and a fast response rate. This facilitates adoption rate, user satisfaction and operational productivity, helping the user utilise the full range of functionalities and ultimately increasing safety.

• **Plug and play** - a new system should not require days and days of training. It is a waste of time and could dramatically increase the cost of implementation. It should be simple enough such as key employees could be trained to super-user status, and thereafter act as the first point-of-contact for questions related to the new system, before escalating to vendor's support team.

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• **Integrations** - can the system easily integrate into your existing applications or even replace the current systems in use? Integration with the current suite of digital applications is crucial and one of the main drivers for choosing to replace a paper-based CoW system. Ensure that the chosen CoW system can integrate with your current systems, and that there is an experienced integration team supporting the implementation.

• **Experienced implementation partner** - the implementation of a system like this can be a lengthy affair, depending on the scope and the size of your organisation. Make sure that the vendor has a track record of successful implementations, and that your organisation is dedicated to make the implementation happen. If you are aware that your current procedures are in need of significant overhauling to live up to industry standards, some additional time may be needed for the improvement. A good system and the right vendor help with this process, tailoring the system and the improvements to your needs.

• **Price** - price is always important and is often the deciding factor when choosing a vendor, but the potential costs of injuries, damage to plant/equipment or even deaths could cost the business millions in direct and indirect (reputation, loss of future revenue) costs. By providing clear, standardised control of work processes delivered through an easy-to-learn and accessible system, you achieve better and safer management of jobs helping prevent incidents and downtime for your business. Please ensure that you evaluate the price in relation to the potential cost savings and efficiency gains when selecting a new system.

Common pitfalls to avoid

Anyone who has ever been involved in implementing any new type of software, has heard stories about IT-projects that failed during implementation or were implemented but never got adopted and were subsequently abandoned.

This does not happen due to lack of efforts from the teams involved, on the contrary, they often work very hard to solve unexpected problems and meet deadlines. In our experience, we see 5 major pitfalls when implementing a digital CoW system.

- **Not having clear goals** - correct scoping, aligning expectations and being very clear on what the final goals are – are critical for measuring success.

- **Not communicating enough** - communicate the many benefits of the new CoW system for the employees in order to develop trust and clarify what is in it for them. Potential fears and worries should be tackled head-on and addressed openly.
  A communication plan should be in place along with the supporting material, before beginning any communication.

- **Insufficient support from all levels of management** - ensure that the project is broadly supported across all locations where it is to be implemented. Identify "champions" within the different management levels to help spearhead the project, celebrate milestones and support the project throughout its lifecycle.

- **Underestimating the data gathering process** - from our experience, the data gathering process can be very labour-intensive and delay the project considerably if the client has not allocated sufficient resources to help with the process. During the planning phase, be sure to accurately scope out the total amount of data to be collected and give yourself enough time to meet the deadline.

- **Training of employees** - not having employees properly trained before handing over the reins. It is critical that ownership and formal responsibility are transferred to local management in order for the project to continue to live after implementation has ended.

Conclusion

Digital CoW systems are moving from being highly industry-specific tools, to broader-based systems capable of being configured to meet the customers' needs in any industry.

The advantages over paper-based systems are clear and will only become more apparent, as business analytics become more prevalent across all sectors. The demand for accurate and insightful reporting will increase over time, and will be considered standard business practices sooner rather than later.

Picking the right system is just as important as picking the right implementation partner. Neither can succeed without the other. An easy-to-use and intuitive digital solution that requires minimal training speeds implementation and adoption, and the right partner helps you navigate all pitfalls, by providing you with the necessary guidance, expertise and follow-through needed.

"A digital CoW system improves safety and operational efficiency while reducing cost"

For an in-depth description of RelyOn Nutec,
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