



## IMERYS HAS ALWAYS GREATLY APPRECIATED WHAT LIES BENEATH THE SURFACE

**With active interests in 47 countries, 240 industrial locations and sales for 2011 that exceed \$3.7 billion it is small wonder that Imerys, the world leader in mineral-based specialties for industry, relies heavily on business solutions to support its many business activities.**

But staying ahead of business trends places an enormous strain on a business solution's capacity, which inevitably leads to the need for change.

To meet this challenge, Imerys upgraded its IFS business solution for the Paper, Ceramics, Performance Minerals, Molochite and Hydrous Kaolin platform units within the European side of its business.

David Osborne, Imerys IT Services Manager Europe, takes up the story, "In facilitating the changing needs of our European business units we had reached the point when the addition of new functionality required costly modifications. So we decided that it was time to move to a new solution with the core functionality that would enable us to introduce new processes, for example the SEPA payment method. And we gave ourselves just 14 months to make this happen!"

Like other businesses in a similar situation, before the upgrade Imerys ran a program that supported the continual development and implementation of modifications. But although this approach had served the company well up to this point, it was becoming increasingly apparent that it would be financially prudent and in the best interests of the company to upgrade their solution and move forward with IFS Applications 7.5.

Michael Dixon, IT Business Project Manager, was tasked with making it happen, "We knew that the decision to upgrade was pivotal to our operational efficiency and that IFS, the supplier of our first solution, possessed an intimate knowledge of our business. So it made sound sense to get them involved from the start." Dixon continued, "At our first meeting I set out a list of requirements that were set in stone. Our first objective was to reduce the number of our modifications by 50% and, secondly, under no circumstance could the upgrade impinge on the company's day-to-day-business operation. Tough, but not impossible, targets."

After an initial briefing session the development teams from both IFS and Imerys got together and jointly worked on coming up with the very best way to meet Imerys's demands and to plan an implementation strategy that could be successfully rolled out without causing any disturbance.

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### ABOUT IMERYS

Imerys, the world leader in mineral specialties for industry, transforms, enriches and combines a unique range of minerals, often extracted from its deposits, to offer features essential to its customers' products and production processes. Thanks to their properties these specialties have a great number of everyday applications in consumer durables, fast moving consumer goods, capital goods and construction, and are developing in many growing markets.



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## PUT TO THE TEST

“The upgrade was deliberately kept on a like-for-like basis so that unless new functionalities removed a modification they would be viewed as separate projects post the upgrade,” said Dixon.

The close cooperation of the two teams ensured that any problems were quickly isolated and dealt with, and the regular project reviews conducted by Michael ensured that both cost and timing remained on budget and schedule.

Naturally, a project of this magnitude involves a great deal of testing, which required a very close liaison between business users groups and the team of solution testers. This cooperation between the two groups worked extremely well, and during the trial period over 300 issues were raised and dealt with. It has subsequently been calculated that during the entire project over 10,000 tests were conducted!

## UNEXPECTED BONUS

On February 20<sup>th</sup> 2012, the Imerys 7.5 upgrade came in on time, and went live with 14 companies across 6 countries covering 44 production sites and user locations. The reaction has been dramatic, Dixon said, “From day one the first wave of 498 users were particularly quick to embrace the new IFS Enterprise Explorer client and to change to the new version without incident. We provided each user with a new mouse mat that carried illustrations of the new users icons together with a brief explanation,” Dixon added, “We have already implemented the SEPA (Single Euro Payment Area) payment in Finland since our go live and currently we are looking at further ways we can incorporate the new functionality to increase the company’s efficiency,” Dixon also mentioned, “The additional flexibility within the system enables us to configure our own events and screen changes without the need for modifications, which is terrific.” Osborne explained, “Following the upgrade a senior Imerys manager commented that it was a bit of a ‘non-event’. We took this as the highest praise we could receive as the upgrade went so smoothly right through to the end.”

On completion of this 14-month upgrade project it was confirmed that the volume of modifications has decreased by 60%. Which is very good news indeed. But there has been another, rather unexpected, bonus too. Dixon said, “While presenting new IFS components to our management I could sense a buzz of excitement going around the room as they began to appreciate the solutions potential. This was a great feeling and made all the hard work worth every moment. Finally, I must tell you about yet another interesting consequence of the upgrade. Many people have been encouraged to re-evaluate our existing processes and are currently looking at ways to exploit some of the existing IFS components that had previously been underused.”

Thanks to the great team work between Imerys and IFS and Imerys has now over 1600 users happily using IFS Applications 7.5 and confidently looks towards a great future.

## BENEFITS

- Reduced modifications by 60%
- Increased functionality at core
- Greater capability
- Non-disruptive implementation



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Michael Dixon,  
IT Business Project Manager at Imerys



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