

7 Challenges the City of Tulsa Quality Assurance Lab faced while working toward becoming TNI Compliant

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Challenge # 1

Change is hard

- Difficult to get buy-in from Management team that working toward TNI compliance was a good idea.
 - Three separately certified labs.
 - Initially relied heavily on me (QA/Safety Officer) to review the standards and help the supervisors implement in their labs. The lab supervisors would tell their staff the items being changed were “because Connie wants them changed”.
 - Performed internal audits at each lab in 2013 utilizing the latest TNI checklist. The audits began a turning point with the Lab Supervisors.

Challenge # 2

Lab Turn over

- COT QAL is on its 3rd Lab Manager since June 2013.
- 3rd Instrumentation Lab Supervisor since June 2013
- 2nd Wet Chemistry Lab Supervisor during this time.
- Huge turnover at the Chemist and Lab Technician levels
 - 2014 – 45 % Turnover
 - 2015 – 30 % Turnover

Challenge # 3

LIMs

- January 2013, I attended my first TNI meeting in Denver.
- During the conference it became clear to me that our LIMs system was inefficient and desperately needed to be replaced or upgraded.
 - The Management team looked at a couple of different LIMs systems but decided in March 2013 to have the LIMs Administrator and IT group upgrade the current system.
 - There were numerous problems trying to upgrade the LIMs software so the decision was made in September 2015 to abandon the upgrade.
 - Began the search for a new LIMs system in December 2015.
 - Budget money has been requested for the new LIMs. If approved, it will be in fiscal year beginning July 1, 2016.

Challenge # 4

Budget issues

- Sales Tax Collections down
- Enterprise fund initiative
 - 0% yearly budget increases
 - Program about doing more with less
 - The labs must keep instruments running longer.
 - Some instruments are no longer covered by maintenance contracts.
 - When instrument failure occurs you must write and wait for emergency PO approvals in order to facilitate repairs.
 - If total failure occurs like the Optima ICP, it requires scrambling and innovation to get replacements.
 - There are instruments in our inventory that have lost sensitivity due to age. As a result it is impossible to meet some of the regulatory requirements, necessitating the need to sub contract analysis until a new instrument is put on-line.



Challenge # 5

Safety

- The City of Tulsa began a huge Safety initiative which officially kicked off on October 25, 2012. Safety is a great thing and was needed in the City of Tulsa.
- Quality Assurance Officer is often combined with safety. Such is the case in our lab. My position title is Quality Assurance and Safety Officer therefore this initiative had a large impact on my time that was available to lead our laboratory to TNI Compliance.
- Adding new safety efforts at the same time that we are working toward becoming TNI Compliant.



Challenge # 6

Additional City of Tulsa changes or projects that are all fighting for our time.

- Kronos software - New Time keeping system that the City fondly calls Tulsa Time
- Lucity software – New Asset Management program
- HACH WIMs software
- Public Outreach

Challenge # 7

Time

- Time that it takes to organize and implement different aspects of the TNI requirements...usually under estimated.
- Time that it takes to provide assistance to other areas within the City of Tulsa that provide samples for analysis.
- The following sections rely heavily on the laboratory to assist with their regulatory requirements and technical support.
 - Water Treatment Plants
 - Waste Water Treatment Plants
 - Industrial Pretreatment
 - Water Distribution
 - Stormwater Pollution Prevention
 - Fats, Oils and Greases
 - Field sampling services