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Challenges

"RAMS was one of the things I looked at shortly after I joined the business," says Frank Williamson, QHSE Systems Manager at Nicol of Skene. "At that time, it was all done just on Word documents and we were having a lot of issues with them."

A tendency to copy and paste information between Word documents meant that some information was being carried across in error or not removed when it should be. This led to RAMS being rejected by clients.

Furthermore, some of the RAMS would rely on generic packs which were printed out. It was very difficult to prove that these had been briefed out to the relevant teams and signed.

Frank says, "I'd had a demonstration of HandsHQ in a previous role, so it was already on my radar; I knew what it could do. I recommended it to the board at Nicol of Skene and they unanimously approved it."



Nicol of Skene is one of the leading civil engineering contractors in the North East of Scotland. Established in 1985, the award-winning engineering business has more than 30 years of experience in delivering civil engineering services, including specialist skillsets such as directional drilling.

In addition to ISO 9001: 2015 and ISO 45001:2018 certifications, Nicol of Skene is one of just a handful of companies in the UK who hold accreditation under the National Electricity Registration Scheme (NERS), the Gas Industry Registration Scheme (GIRS), and the Water Industry Registration Scheme (WIRS).

Solution

"The rejections were one of the big things we were trying to avoid and, obviously, HandsHQ eliminates that problem," says Frank. "After we started using HandsHQ, there was a significant improvement noted across the board. Generally, the RAMS are far better and far quicker."

Previously, the Nicol of Skene managers producing RAMS could spend up to three or four days working on a RAMS. Frank explains: "The time it took to produce a RAMS would vary widely because of the type of work we do. They took anything from a couple of hours to a couple of days for some of the more complicated stuff."

"One of the best things has been how the clients see it. We've had a lot of good feedback from some of our major clients about the system and the quality of our RAMS."



Frank Williamson
QHSE Systems Manager
Nicol of Skene

Now, using HandsHQ the time taken to complete a RAMS has been vastly reduced. "I tend to do the more complex RAMS," says Frank "and I've actually done two sets this morning, including the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) information. It's very easy."

At the same time, Frank chose to implement HandsHQ Training Register to complement the digital RAMS. Training Register is a software solution that can be used as a standalone system or in conjunction with HandsHQ RAMS software. It enables companies to effortlessly manage the complex training requirements associated with high-risk work.

Results

As well as integrating COSHH and training information in the same system as the RAMS, Frank lists the main benefits of using HANDSHQ as:

- Time savings
- Reduction in the duplication of work
- Ease of adding new risks and mitigations to the library
- Easy-to-use overview of all RAMS and ability to navigate to individual RAMS
- Integration of training information, using Training Register
- Improved quality
- Reduced rejection rate
- Greater client satisfaction

"The fact that it's project-specific, bespoke RAMS on every site now is very different to how we used to manage it," admits Frank. "Now they are bespoke to the job, they are briefed at the start of the project and signed. It's a good reminder and reinforces the health and safety performance."

"Everyone thinks it's straightforward with HandsHQ. Certainly, from my point of view, we're never going back to paper or Word documents!"

As well as benefitting from opportunity to improve efficiency through digitalisation, the reduction in paper is an ecological and organisational improvement.

"One of the biggest things has been how the clients see it," continues Frank. "We've had a lot of good feedback from our major clients about the system and the quality of our RAMS. And a lot of companies like the fact we are going down the digital route and trying to reduce paperwork."

As well as impressing clients, the Nicol of Skene team has impressed its auditors with HandsHQ too. In September 2020, the management team decided to implement ISO 24001. The first audit took place in April 2021, with Nicol of Skene notified of its success in July 2021.

Frank states: "Obviously, RAMS was a part of the environment management certification and HandsHQ was demonstrated to the auditors. Feedback from all parties has been very good."

"It's very easy to pull out individual training reports, and it's simple to link those records to the RAMS. I use the system regularly, particularly for our larger clients."

The use of Training Register further supports Frank's health and safety improvement programme. The system ensures that training for all personnel is recorded with expiry dates and evidence. This helps the business to identify any training requirements and skills gaps and to ensure that staff are never sent to a job without the necessary training. Frank and the training administrator automatically receive email notifications before training certifications expire, so they can proactively schedule refresher courses.

"It's very easy to pull out individual training reports," says Frank, "and it's simple to link those records to the RAMS. I use the system regularly, particularly for our larger clients."

In 2020, Nicol of Skene won the Excellence in Health and Safety Category for the North of Scotland at the Trades Awards. This year, the company has been selected as a finalist in the same category.

"HandsHQ feeds into those award wins," says Frank, "one of the things the judges picked up on was how Nicol of Skene is digitalising its operations. They had a demo of the HandsHQ system as part of that. I'm always surprised about the number of companies – some bigger than ourselves – that are still doing their RAMS on Word documents."

Now Frank is keen to ensure everything goes through HandsHQ. Although 95 percent of jobs already have RAMS generated using HandsHQ, up until now the small works division has relied on generic RAMS. Frank states: "Within the next year, we'll get to 100% bespoke RAMS for every job. Everyone thinks it's straightforward with HandsHQ. Certainly, from my point of view, we're never going back to paper or Word documents!"

About HandsHQ

HandsHQ is an innovative risk assessment and method statement platform for specialist contractors that reduces accidents, keeps projects on track and wins more work. Our dedication to simplifying the risk assessment process has made HandsHQ the most trusted RAMS platform in high-risk environments since 2013.

Used on over 90,000 projects across EMEA, our clients include BJF Group, Polyteck Group, G4S, Polypal and Barnwood Construction. Typically companies using HandsHQ experience over 80% time-savings on RAMS creation; 90% reduction in rejected documents; and upwards of 230% ROI in the first year.

Find out how HandsHQ can help your business at www.handshq.com or call us on 020 3318 4901

Adelaide Wharf Installation

Risk assessment

 Add the activities you'll be undertaking for this project. You can customise the text to ensure your documents are site-specific.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General	Reference	Risk assessment	Version
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	RA100	Contact with electricity from overhead power sources	● Latest version
<input type="checkbox"/>	RA101	General office work	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	RA102	Visually impaired people at work	● Latest version
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	RA103	Delivery of materials	● Latest version
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	RA104	Working with or around mould spores	● Latest version
<input type="checkbox"/>	RA105	Working adjacent to a railway line	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	RA106	Working in dusty environments	● Latest version
<input type="checkbox"/>	RA107	Working in noisy environments	
<input type="checkbox"/>	RA108	Working with or around combustible materials	
<input type="checkbox"/>	RA109	Working in confined spaces	