

Integrated Software and Hardware Solutions for Quality Process Management



Rick Bump
President

CEOCFO: *Mr. Bump, would you tell us about ASI Datamyte?*

Mr. Bump: We provide integrated software and hardware solutions for manufacturing companies to better manage their quality process from the planning and design phase through the delivery phase. Our users plan, design, analyze, control and feedback results of the full cycle including comments from the end consumers. We turn the data into actionable feedback enabling the data based corrections to the process or suppliers.

CEOCFO: *Is it unusual to provide both hardware and software in this arena?*

Mr. Bump: Actually, we do see competition out there that provides both. Generally speaking, software that is provided by our hardware competition is more of a spot solution around data collection or SPC. ASI is, as far as I know, the only company to provide a pure enterprise class, integrated quality management suite as well as precision hardware devices and data collection.

CEOCFO: *Are manufacturers in general looking for a complete system or do they realize after experience what they had been missing?*

Mr. Bump: Both. Our clients cover the spectrum of awareness and usage. Each client's spot on the spectrum is not necessarily defined by the size of the company or the industry. It really comes down to how sophisticated and focused the leadership is around quality. What we are finding is that in some cases, we need to educate to create demand for our products and in other cases, we show up and people are fully versed and aware of what they want and see how our products fit into their solution.

As we are able to offer both hardware and software to round out a complete solution, we are able to start the conversation from multiple points. Our hardware both performs measurement activities as well as enables the data collection activities via thousands of measurement devices. Our torque wrenches and gauges enable us to offer very specific answers to measuring quality relative to specifications. Our data collection line opens the conversation of gather data from several devices as well as guided tasks and real-time analysis which ultimately is focused on effectiveness and efficiency at the job or role level. All of these conversations lead to what to do with the data and then ultimately how specific data ties into the entire life cycle of a product, brand, line, factory and company through our software.

CEOCFO: *Does the 40-year history of the company matter these days, or is it about what you can do for them now?*

Mr. Bump: It is a combination of both. If you look at the history of the company, ASI Datamyte has a very strong and trusted brand in the automotive space reaching back over forty years ago. We also have long history of our flagship software product, QDA in Europe with some of the largest and most successful automotive manufacturers in that region. All of that rich history does help define some of our success and capabilities in market. That said, there is also a certain amount of what-have-you-done-for-me-lately? As with any industry, we need to keep up with what is going on with the market trends, where people are going. We need to be thought leaders and provide valuable insight and be able to offer those solutions. We are aim to leverage our rich history as well continue to think out-front and bring those solutions to our clients.

CEOCFO: *Would you describe a typical engagement with an auto company?*

Mr. Bump: We have a few different entry points into an organization. We do get phone calls from plant level folks that are looking for measurement devices and data collection. Generally speaking, those are plant managers and quality managers. Initially, these engagements are generally training and configuration based on the intended use of our

products. Our objective though is to have a dialogue around the capabilities of the hardware itself and how we fit into the overall design of a quality process. From there, we engage the conversation around the software that is necessary to support and leverage the data that is being collected. Oftentimes we are finding data being collected but it is not always turned into actionable feedback into the process. We do find a large number of our clients ranging anywhere from small businesses up to the Fortune 500, do engage with us this way.

Alternatively, we also have an entry point through the corporate level where we are brought into to help implement capabilities of an integrated, process driven system. As a recent example, we have recently engaged with a company that has had a significant recall and they are trying to figure out how to solve quality from an overall design. As you'd guess, there is a significant amount of money that goes into recall products, not just financially but also the hit to your brand. The corporate level folks are starting to really understand that it is not just enough to gather the data but you need to do something with it. The company needs to integrate information across the phases of the entire life cycle to close the loop and improve communications and the process. Then you can ultimately reduce cost and improve not just revenues but also the quality of the product and brand.

CEOCFO: Does it surprise you that people are just waking up to the fact that they should be doing something with the data?

Mr. Bump: In some ways it does. Having been through the ERP and TQM heyday it does set me back a little bit to see that there is often a lack of understanding around the benefits of integrated solutions. When I got involved with ASI a few years ago, I saw this as an "oh my gosh these are such amazing products with an amazing customer list". We look at the customers and we realize that they are not using nearly as much of the functionality as I would have expected. We go out and talk to executives of potential customers and existing customers to tell the story of the benefits of an integrated quality management solution. Often you find people asking questions and then suddenly the light goes on and you can see they understand the real possibilities

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An analogy I often tell use I talk to people is for those of us that were around in doing systems work back in the nineteen nineties, it was the process of educating and creating the demand around ERP systems. Many people had systems that would do accounting or finance or HR or manufacturing. Then you started to tell the story about how the organization can be run more efficiently and profitability through an integrated system. It is very much the same story that we are going through here ultimately ending up in conversations around how we properly integrate QDA into MES systems or ERP systems that create the overall enterprise back-office systems that ultimately end up in a more efficient enterprise process and management system.

CEOCFO: Is it an ongoing system with ASI or do you set up the system and then the company takes it from there?

Mr. Bump: It is both and everything in between. We have clients that use our on-line offering and we have clients that install and implement our products on premise. For the on-premise clients, we have clients that chose to support and manage the solutions themselves and conversely we have clients that we will provide outsourced support and monitoring.

We have clients who understand the magnitude of what the system can do and they are implementing many parts of QDA and like many ERP types, enterprise systems have many modules with lots of functionality. Not every module is for every company. People are leveraging many of the modules to help them achieve their vision. In some cases, you get somebody in there and tell them the story but they are not really at the point where they are able to go jump in with both feet. It is an ongoing dialogue where you start to see the benefit of one of the modules and then you talk about how that extends upstream and downstream, vertically and horizontally and then they understand and suggest we do a little of something else. We will continue to be there to help them with the implementation. We are fundamentally an on-premise software other than SaaS.

CEOCFO: If we spoke a year from now, what might be different at ASI?

Mr. Bump: While we have our operating plan, our projections and forecasts and I believe we good path for getting there, there are certainly some external factors that play into our success. We will continue to evolve the products and continue to deepen our relationships with our existing customers. What I am really hopeful for over the next twelve months is a

broader adoption within manufacturing for the integrated quality management solution. We spend a lot of time now trying to educate and create demand. I think there are many people out there that understand the value proposition but I think that at a broader level, organizations adopting what it is what we are going after. It is a culmination of years and years of people focusing on improving quality. This really is the organization and enterprise embracing, bringing it into the fold of how business itself is run and creating itself a quality as a tier within the manufacturing process.

CEOCFO: *Why do you think this is the time when people will understand?*

Mr. Bump: More and more people are starting to understand the impact of poor quality and that is not just around financials although ultimately that is how most businesses are measured. You are starting to see more and more awareness around quality at the brand level and the impact on others' lives. If you look at some of the things that have happened over the years in the automotive industry with respect to death and recalls and things that have gone wrong, it just needs to be improved. Leaving quality to happen just at the lab or just at the end of the line, there is just not much you are going to do when something goes wrong and it is two years from now. The cost resolve is too high and it is not just the monetary costs, but the cost in some of the other areas as well like human lives.

CEOCFO: *There seems to be a trend today for companies to want solutions and not just raw data; how do you help a company with potential ways to make use of the solutions?*

Mr. Bump: You hear a lot about "big data." Our clients collect massive volumes of data through any multitude of measuring devices whether those are hand-held/portable or fixed/stationary. One of the real benefits of ASI is that we provide the ability to take all of this data and distill it down into truly actionable items. We can show the plant manager, the brand manager and the executives exactly what is going on from a traceability perspective throughout the manufacturing process by plant, line, brand and region. This enables decision makers at various levels to understand exactly what is going on rather than getting reams of data without any action tied to it. We do differentiate ourselves from the rest of the market by translating massive amounts of data into actions for improving the process as close to the point of issue or failure as possible.

CEOCFO: *Why choose ASI Datamyte?*

Mr. Bump: We are uniquely positioned as the global providers. There are competitors out there that can offer you software that is similar and even services but I do believe at my heart that we are the leader in the market with respect to functionality and capabilities. I believe that we have the market's lead in services we provide. We have a great team of many very smart people. We are there to provide a solution and not just to offer up some functionality and walk away and hope it works for you. We differentiate ourselves from the market in many ways and we are very thoughtful in terms of what functionality we add and what services and what hardware devices we are adding to the ecosystem. We are there for our clients and we spend a lot of time listening to our clients and their requirements and trying to make sure that what is delivered is exactly what they need based on the business case and not just what the software can provide.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine



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