

Pharmaceutical group Bial continues multi-year relationship with IFS to manage its corporate processes



The agility, effectiveness, and flexibility to achieve greater autonomy, and lower costs than those offered by competitors are some of the reasons why the Bial Group chose IFS. It offers the Group access to complete and centralized information in the areas of finance, logistics, manufacturing, maintenance, HR, quality, business intelligence, demand planning, and EDI. This allows them to know the exact state of the business at any given time and to optimize business management.

The Portuguese pharmaceutical group Bial chose IFS many years ago to manage its business resources. Since then, both companies have extended and improved their relationship in the different business areas, to the point where there are very few people in a management position at Bial for whom IFS does not have an impact on the development of their work. This is because all the processes for budgeting, forecasting, parts of the strategic planning, authorized purchases, sales, batch control inventory, maintenance, cost management of research development projects, HR, finances, inventory, production, and manufacturing are in IFS. Other specific systems that add value to the process at Bial, such as the information security management system, which was developed for immunotherapy, and the warehouse automation system, are connected to IFS.

The Bial Group has decided to have just one ERP provider for all the areas, but with very specific solutions for each one of the functions. It enables the company to have all its information centralized and integrated in order to analyze the status of the company at any given place and time.

A solution for quality management

When the people at Bial decided to implement an ERP solution, they considered the possibility of doing it with other internationally well-known ERP providers as well as with IFS. Therefore, they carried out a restructured assessment of the functionality and technological parameters, among other aspects. "There were two products that excelled in comparison with the rest in these areas; although the final decision had a lot to do with the low-cost culture of IFS," says Rui Rodrigues, IT Manager at Bial. "Actually it was difficult to make a decision because back then IFS was little known in Portugal. Nevertheless, the group needed an integrated system that could

About Bial Group

The Bial Group is a Portuguese pharmaceutical company with 90+ years of experience. Besides the sites in Portugal, Spain, and Italy and the regional branches in Central America, Angola, and Côte d'Ivoire; it exports drugs to more than 40 countries. During the last 20 years, the Group has worked on research development, a field where they are increasingly more competitive. Currently, the company has 800 employees. In Spain, it has facilities in Madrid and Bilbao, where the Group has set up a very important area focused on immunotherapy. The Group had an annual turnover of €140 billion. The current main strategic course of action for the other countries in Europe is the internalization of the different range of products and to continue with the development of new molecules.



Keeping life
in mind.

cover all our management needs in every area and, at the same time, provide completely centralized information.” The flexibility offered by IFS was another reason why it was chosen. Previously, processes were less agile and efficient but, since the implementation of IFS, the group has gained greater autonomy because of the agility enabled by IFS. This has also allowed for cost reduction. “Speed has been achieved, which was one of the reasons why we continue working with IFS,” says Rodrigues “For example, Excel spreadsheets are directly connected to data prepared by Bial and IFS; on the following morning, these spreadsheets are available for the employees that have to analyze them.”

“Another reason has to do with the fact that Trade Management, which is functionality that we needed, is currently integrated in the new standard version of IFS 8. Applying this functionality to our industry offers an additional level of security, allowing us to know which person handled not just a single batch, but every single package. In addition to that, IFS has been validated by the FDA regulation (Food and Drug Administration). This is essential if you are part of this industry,” says Rodrigues.

Nowadays, the system, which has been implemented on an Oracle database after an initial investment of approximately €600,000, is already being used by almost 200 users across the different functionalities.

We have an ERP solution that covers all the areas as well as the specific developments integrated with the application. Thus, all our processes are controlled by IFS. Therefore, IFS is part of our core business. We have gained agility and a total control over overall costs.

Rui Rodrigues, IT Manager, Bial Group

A business strategy for the future

At present, Bial’s priorities are focused on document management in two very specific areas: the introduction of new drugs, which is called the submission management system, and submitting international documents regarding the drugs, in compliance with the ISO 2000, ISO 1400 standards. That means that they are looking for a document management system that complies with FDA requirements. But they are also working on a quality management tool for opportunities, suppliers, returns and refunds. This is an additional tool to IFS and will be rolled out in several places together with IFS. Furthermore, they are

Benefits seen using IFS

- Agility to adapt to different business areas
- Autonomy
- Lower costs
- Centralized information
- Certification of FDA compliance
- Functionality and efficiency

working to incorporate additional processes related to the manufacture of immunotherapy products that they will develop based on the IFS manufacturing model.

Another course of action that will be developed and leveraged is the technological aspect, with Bial moving towards mobile platforms to facilitate access to the ERP solution anywhere and from any device. Referring to this, Rodrigues says that “the management team is increasingly using tablet devices, and the rest of the workforce will need to use these mobile devices for more tasks than just checking e-mails and schedules.”

The Bial Group always plans its market strategy in the long term. The strategy is focused on research and internationalization. In connection to this, and looking to add new functionality and improve earnings, the aim is to work in new areas like project management through a process of simplification. The objective is to cut maintenance costs, for example through better monitoring of project KPIs. For the Group it is very important to control costs in its most important sites, which are located in Portugal, Spain, and other countries, in order to be able to do so at global and corporate levels and so be able to cut costs.



Find out more

Further information, e-mail info@ifs.com, contact your local IFS office or visit our web site, ifs.com

