

User Report: From stacks of paper to digital brilliance – AIXTRON SE and the journey to digital operating instructions

AIXTRON SE, founded in 1983, is a global leading provider of deposition systems for the semiconductor industry. With its main office in Herzogenrath (near Aachen) and branch offices in Asia, the United States, and Europe, the company delivers ultra-modern solutions for manufacturing components based on compound semiconductors and organic materials. These components are used in areas such as LED technology, data transfer, energy management, and many other high-tech industries. Yet as impressive as the products that AIXTRON manufactures are, 2016 proved to be a challenging year for dealing with documentation – paper, everywhere you looked.



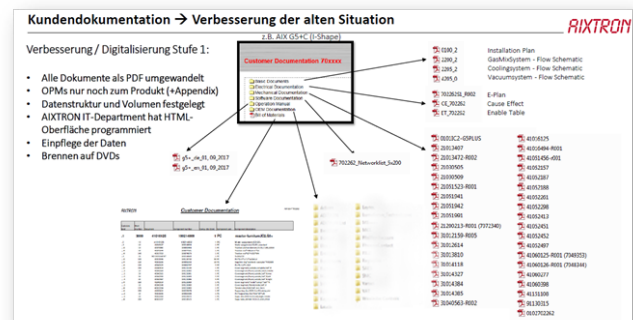
From paper to pixels – the transformation

First, the mountains of paper had to be dealt with. The company decided on a two-pronged approach: outsourcing for printing and copying services, and gradually digitizing the documents. “We converted all consumer information into PDFs, which was our first step towards paperless documentation,” says Steinborn.

AIXTRON – A company in transition

“When I took over the department in 2016, I faced the mammoth task of turning mountains of paperwork into something efficient and digital,” recalls Benjamin Steinborn, Senior Department Manager for Product Documentation and CE Officer at AIXTRON. “At the time we had 20 DIN A4 folders for one system, filled with drawings, tables, and DVDs – not really what you’d describe as ‘modern.’”

This was a problem that had to be solved. Our customers were demanding fast, efficient, digital solutions that made their lives easier. And so began the gradual process of digitization – with help from gds GmbH.”



But that was just the beginning. Together with gds GmbH, a long-standing partner, AIXTRON planned its leap into the digital age of documentation.

As a service provider, gds already created most of the documentation for AIXTRON in the docuglobe content management system. Now it took on mapping the organization of all of the PDFs in the project and system module. This docuglobe plug-in brings along many

advantages when it comes to managing documents from different suppliers in different languages. What's more, users still have the option to keep using docuglobe's extensive printing functions whenever they want. AIXTRON obtained access to the content management system for this purpose. This was the primary foundation for using the "iiRDS" exchange format, still very new at the time, to transfer all of the system documentation to easybrowse.

Then started the second phase: introducing easybrowse, the gds content delivery system that allowed documentation to be provided digitally for customers and internal users.

Björn Ferencz, Sales Consultant at gds, who has advised AIXTRON since 2015, recalls, "We had to find the right time to start the transformation from paper to digital. It was important to understand the customers' exact needs and then develop a solution that best fulfilled those needs. Working closely with Benjamin Steinborn was the key to our success."

The challenges along the way

Naturally, this transformation was not without its challenges. AIXTRON not only had to manage the technical requirements of digital documentation, but also adapt its internal processes and structures. "It was an organizational feat," Steinborn admits, "because we not only had to replace paper documentation with digital alternatives, we also had to make sure that the new solutions were efficient and user-friendly."

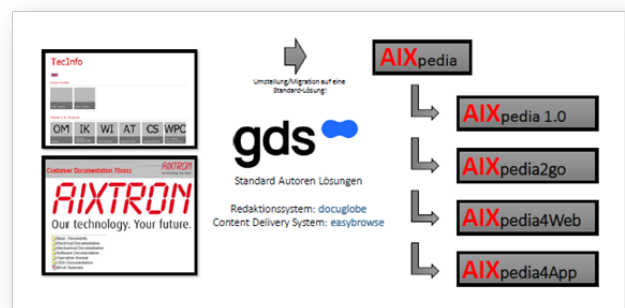
One of the biggest problems was the sheer quantity of data. "We were working with 800-page operating manuals, and it was often way too much. Customers simply could not find the information they needed when they needed it," he continues. To solve this problem, the team at AIXTRON conducted a thorough target group analysis.

"We asked our customers what was missing from their documentation, and received feedback that they wanted clearer structure and better navigation."

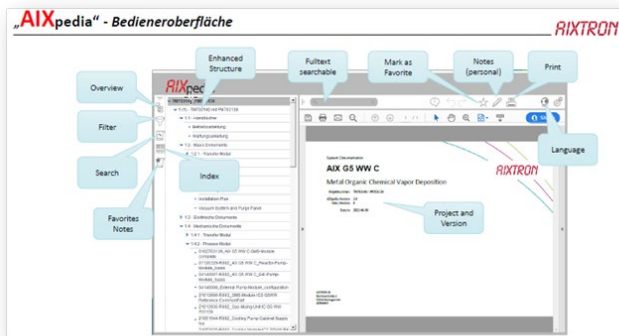
The solution: A digital success story

After intensive workshops and close collaboration between AIXTRON and gds, the ultimate result was AIXpedia – a platform that enables customers to access current, relevant, custom documentation at any time.

"AIXpedia is our 'single point of truth.' This is where all of the information comes together, and the customers can find exactly the documents they need – without having to fight through a mountain of paper," says Steinborn.



The platform is designed to work both online and offline, which is especially advantageous for cleanrooms where there is no Wi-Fi. "We developed an app that let our customers access documentation even without a network connection. That was a real game changer," says Steinborn.



Conclusion: More than just documentation

The partnership between AIXTRON and gds has shown that a transformation isn't just a technology issue; it's an issue of collaboration and understanding the needs of customers. AIXTRON has managed to go from a paperwork-heavy documentation strategy to a digital pioneer – and all with a clear goal in sight: to maximize customer satisfaction.

“At the end of the day, it always comes down to giving the customer what they need – and sometimes a bit more,” concludes Steinborn. Looking ahead, he also added, “We are proud of what we have achieved, but there is still much more to do. And we look forward to doing it.”

The current situation and looking ahead

Today, after two and a half years of intensive work, AIXTRON is well set up with its digital documentation solution. “We have a solution that not only meets legislative requirements, but the expectations of our customers as well. However, there is always room for improvement, and we are continually working on optimizing our systems further,” says Steinborn.

Despite its successes, AIXTRON is facing new challenges. The EU is planning new regulations, such as the digital product pass and the new machinery regulation, that will have to be implemented by 2027. These requirements will significantly increase the administrative burden for companies, but AIXTRON is confident that it can overcome these hurdles, too. “There are many regulatory challenges ahead of us, but we’re prepared to face them. We’ve learned to stay flexible and adapt, and that will serve us well in the future,” says Steinborn.

Björn Ferencz adds, “It’s fascinating to see how far AIXTRON has come in such a short time. This journey from classic paper documentation to a fully integrated digital solution is a prime example of how companies can future-proof themselves with the right strategy and technology.”