



Case Study

Steam Whistle brewing aces compliance and quality with eLabJournal

“eLabJournal has given our QA department a performance advantage by bringing our QA program to the next level”



Steam Whistle

Known as Canada’s Premium Beer, Steam Whistle crafts its beer using only four natural ingredients with no additives or preservatives. With its distinctive packaging and celebratory nature, Steam Whistle has become a brand well-loved by Canadians coast to coast. Steam Whistle brews and nationally distributes its

iconic Premium Pilsner, Pale Ale, and Session Lager as well as Fat Tire Amber Ale and Voodoo Ranger IPA from American craft beer partner, New Belgium Brewing. Steam Whistle is located in the historic Roundhouse near Toronto’s CN Tower.

Goal

Become Canada’s most respected beer consistently delivering exceptional quality in every bottle, keg, or can.

VISIT STEAM WHISTLE



Tudor Saroiu

*Manager, Quality Assurance
Environmental Health and Safety*

“More importantly, the LIMS system (eLabJournal) has given our QA department a performance advantage by bringing our QA program to the next level while enabling us to meet the requirements of the CFIA Safe Food for Canadians Act with respect to the traceability of each ingredient and the batch data.”

Challenge

How to comply with a new law and improve quality assurance and production

A new law, introduced in July 2020 by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), requires manufacturers to be able to trace quality problems back to raw materials (just barley, hops, yeast, water and primary packaging materials for Steam Whistle) and forward to the finished product. If a batch of beer had an off-flavor it might be traced back to a bad lot of yeast, for example, and to identify any other production batches that contained it. Then the production batches could be traced forward to all the finished products that contained them so they could be located and withdrawn. Fortunately, brewing is always a batch process!

Big breweries have detailed records in their ERP (enterprise resource planning) computer systems, so they were already compliant with the new law. Smaller breweries can keep their records in any form they want, as long as they could trace backward to stop production with a “bad” ingredient and forward to identify “bad”

finished product; but slow response could put them out of business or even endanger customers. So CFIA inspectors are right to look for fast, if not instantaneous, response.

Tudor Saroiu, the QA manager, explained, “Our company-wide QA program has five QA technicians spread over two manufacturing facilities, each with its own QA laboratory. They generated a massive amount of quality control data on raw ingredients, work in progress (WIP), and final batches. We had a big challenge keeping all that data logged, complete, organized, and accurate every day over multiple brands and products. Each department had to input data into its own system, but tracing problems through manufacturing would require slow and error-prone lookups across those systems.”

Steam Whistle had all the required information in various systems, but wanted to step up to a company-wide system that would give instant traceability, not just to CFIA inspectors, but to improve the company’s overall production and QA performance, providing greater visibility for corrective action, root cause analysis, and preventive action.

Solution

eLabJournal and eLabInventory successfully address both compliance and QA needs

Tudor could have implemented an expensive ERP system to meet the CFIA compliance requirements, but his scientific QA background suggested a better approach: he could use a laboratory information management system (LIMS) to deliver CFIA-level traceability and a great deal more, by automating the recording of the countless QA test results on raw materials, WIP, and finished products passing through both breweries and even managing the inventories of laboratory supplies.

As he put it, “The LIMS project was undertaken to have an easier way of gathering all the intermediate WIP data, as well as raw material and finished product batch data. This would improve efficiency, and make the data more visible so we could easily see trends across every process flow step. The CFIA traceability requirements may have given us the stimulus to install the new system, but its capabilities provide benefits far beyond governmental compliance.”

An online search of available LIMS products showed that the electronic lab notebook eLabJournal, with integrated inventory and protocol management, stood out against its competitors in ease of use, ease of implementation, and affordability, as confirmed in the thirty-day free trial period. It was up and running quickly, with the help of the Bio-ITech account manager, delivering immediate CFIA compliance and many other QA and production benefits, though Tudor and his team are constantly finding new applications and refining their reports and queries to fit Steam Whistle Brewing.

Result

eLabJournal proves effective, easy, and affordable

“We now have a “one-stop shop” to input all of the data, instead of three different functional areas with shared drives. eLabJournal has greatly helped the quality assurance laboratories in both the breweries to input the raw data for each batch of beer, from raw ingredients through processing and into the final packaged products.

Furthermore, it has allowed our QA department data to be linked with our production department’s input, giving us an overview of the whole process for each batch. This enables us to much more easily determine preventive and corrective actions, and perform root cause analyses. We can also see the trends for each brand of product we are making.

More importantly, the LIMS features of eLabJournal has given our QA department a performance advantage by bringing our QA program to the next level while enabling us to meet the requirements of the CFIA Safe Food for Canadians Act with respect to the traceability of each ingredient and the batch data. And it gives our company a quality advantage versus potential competitors when it comes to the visibility of the QA program and the reliability of data for third party stakeholders.

Finally, the eLabInventory sample management module has made ordering laboratory supplies easier and more streamlined, including flagging what needs to be ordered soon and in what quantities, and then tracking the orders until they are received on-site.”



About eLabJournal

eLabJournal offers an intuitive and flexible solution to manage information in your lab. The all-in-one Electronic Lab Notebook also includes modules for sample tracking and protocol management. eLabJournal improves efficiency when documenting, organizing, searching and archiving data, samples and protocols. The software is suitable for any lab ranging from small academic laboratories and start-up companies to large academic institutes and globally operating companies.



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