Interview: Talisen and Boeing Talk Collaboration

CIMdata Commentary

Key takeaways:

- *Talisen Technologies, Inc. and The Boeing Company are jointly developing a next generation OEM/Supplier collaboration solution.*
- *The solution focuses on three product development areas: communication of upfront requirements, interactive collaboration during product design, and collaboration during product servicing.*

CIMdata recently had the opportunity to interview Mr. John Stevens, SVP Aerospace & Defense, Talisen Technologies (www.talisentech.com), and Mr. Neil Lichty, Senior Technical Specialist, The Boeing Company, about their combined efforts to provide an OEM/Supplier collaboration solution that could support Boeing into the future. In addition, they hope to set a collaboration standard that all aerospace and defense companies can adopt.[1]

CIMdata: What is the joint business and technical strategy of Talisen and Boeing for OEM/Supplier collaboration?

Neil Lichty: From a Boeing OEM perspective, we need a collaboration network with our business integration points across our product lifecycle. Talisen fills a role for Boeing helping us specialize in what is the upfront collaboration needed when we are starting project work or design work; what is interactive collaboration during our compliance venues when we need to collect data from our business partners and suppliers; and ultimately how do we fulfill that once our product is in service.

We work with Talisen in all three areas and connect across that lifecycle so that our collaboration has consistency. We know the industry wants consistency and standardization. Now that we have a pattern in place, industry can take advantage of that as well. Our collaboration has too much variety and the cost patterns and efficiencies dictate that we must apply more energy to stabilize.

John Stevens: Talisen's overall strategy is to drive business value with our customers by using innovative and proven technologies, applied expertise, and speed of delivery. We help customers, like Boeing, with the adoption, implementation, and operational support of aerospace technologies in the areas of digital collaboration, secure gateway systems, technical authoring, and supply chain procurement.

Our OEM strategy with Boeing is to assist with strategic planning, implementation, and facilitation in the use of supply chain technologies. In supporting Boeing's goal of a collaboration network, we've developed specific software for supplier requirements exchange, data transmittal, and obsolescence management.

CIMdata: Many commercial collaboration solutions in the market today focus on the engineering design aspect of product development. Does Talisen see a wider audience for collaboration in such areas as manufacturing and service?

John Stevens: Absolutely. Engineering is just one aspect, albeit a very important one, of the collaboration space. We look at it as an ecosystem. It is not just an OEM engineer to supplier engineer collaboration. It is a community of collaboration. The full collaboration between an OEM and supplier with respect to product design, support, and obsolescence encompasses

[1] Research for this commentary was partially supported by Talisen Technologies.

engineering, quality, purchasing, and standards organizations. It crosses the verticals of PLM, ERP, and manufacturing. The collaboration suite is geared towards engineering, but the totality spans internal and external organizations responsible for product design, procurement, and support. Add in the complexity of sub-tier suppliers and there is a significant need for streamlined communication and collaboration. The ability of Talisen's Model Based Exchange (MBX) suite aligns the broader processes of OEM-supplier collaboration to ensure consistency, traceability, risk mitigation, and performance analysis for a better product.

Neil Lichty: We cannot afford to look at collaboration from a silo perspective only. The architecture says engineering and purchasing must play together. Today our business rules do not support that culture. In the architecture of the solution we looked at how to bring those two forces together. By default, the force of the supplier comes into play. So, we are creating a shared collaboration workspace that encompasses all organizations and domains.

CIMdata: What are the challenges you face in your approach to the collaboration problem?

Neil Lichty: The one challenge that stands out the most is we have had difficulty advancing an operational concept that reduces the current experience of intensive personal touch time. We need to break through the culture of people wanting to control things locally to them. We talk about the digital environment as though it is natural to go there, but it is very much against the traditional expectation that—*I control what I do because it is right in front of me*.

The biggest challenge in front of us is transformation of the attitude—*You mean I will put my information out for everyone to see it and we will work together?*

John Stevens: I see two significant challenges in tackling collaboration. Perhaps the biggest challenge is data consistency across the collaboration ecosystem. Is each link in the supply chain looking at the same version of data? Having a unified approach, speeds the design and feedback process and helps the OEM and supplier stay on the same page with accurate information. Companies are looking for a standardized approach for digital collaboration that spans PLM, ERP, and manufacturing internally and efficiently shares the appropriate information with their partners and suppliers. For many companies, that is a work in progress.

Technology adoption is another major challenge. This challenge, as with any company, is making sure the supporting technology specifically addresses the company's needs and gets used. Customers often have some variation on the same problem they are trying to solve; and Boeing is no different in that respect. They were seeking a standard approach that is open, yet secure in design and is effective with a very diverse supplier community. The solution is designed to be adaptable to compliment Boeing's core systems while moving towards an improved experience in collaboration. Looking more broadly at the aerospace industry, companies do not want to be locked into any particular solution; which creates a challenge as well as an opportunity. A flexible architecture is essential for collaboration systems, especially if the focus is on industry adoption. We looked at this as an opportunity to develop an OEM centric solution with strong application programming interfaces (API) knowing we'd have to solve the problem not only with Boeing, but within each customer's world.

Neil Lichty: One aspect that is the biggest connecting point in the architecture is licensing cost relative to the suppliers. It is minimized. It cannot be a cost burden on them.

John Stevens: Talisen has a long standing relationship with Boeing. We truly work with their great team as a trusted partner and focus on delivering value through extensive industry knowledge and strategic thinking; helping them solve business problems. At the core of Talisen, our mission is to empower Boeing and other organizations to achieve their goals through

strategic, enterprise-wide solutions. It is a holistic approach to collaboration and business transformation.

CIMdata: Thank you both for your insights and CIMdata looks forward to following your progress.

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