



**Customer:** TRW Automotive Systems, Sunderland, UK.

**Industry Sector:** Automotive

**Project / Solution:** Shop Floor Electronic Document Control – April 2010

In April 2010, TRW Automotive Systems in Houghton-le-Spring near Sunderland selected Singlepoint for a key project to introduce electronic document control to their manufacturing processes. An ambitious go-live target was set of end of August. Stella Wilkes and Mark Scott, both Quality Engineers within Mike O’Neill Quality and Engineering department, were assigned the task of deploying Singlepoint to the business. Here in an interview with Synchronology co-founder Andrew Holland, they relate the story so far.

**Andrew: What have you used Singlepoint Document Control for so far?** Mark: Initially we’ve used it for what we call “Build Standard” documentation, which means anything that effects the manufacturing of the product such as control plans, process flows, special characteristics lists, error proofing plans, SOP’s, PFMEA’s, first-off forms etc. These are typically Word and Excel documents but also Publisher and some Powerpoint – in all there are more than 2,000 documents in there already, but that figure is steadily rising.

**Andrew: What was the pre-existing business problem that caused you to purchase Singlepoint?** Stella: The problems were two fold. The previous document control system was really unwieldy – we had hundreds of documents across several servers with different access rights, and if you didn’t know where to look it took ages to find the right document, so it was a very time consuming process. Secondly, management of the correct revisions to the cell level was also difficult; people had out-dated versions to hand when compared to the current version on the system – or they simply couldn’t find it all. A knock-on effect of this was that people started to use this as an excuse for not having the right documentation. But now that we’ve got Singlepoint people have one location for everything, an easy to use system where they can access all of their documents quickly and easily and know that what they’re accessing is the current, up-to-date information.

**Andrew: What benefits has Singlepoint given TRW?** Stella: Well taking setting sheets as an example; under the old system there was the possibility of someone using the incorrect version, thus a potential for making scrap – that cannot happen anymore. Also, machine down-time is greatly reduced because people aren’t hunting around from one folder to another one or trying to find a document manually in a paper system somewhere – in Singlepoint people are finding the right document in seconds. Also, and this might be difficult to believe, but we are saving a fortune on paper: things like PFMEA’s are big documents and they get printed off again and again and the cost in paper is substantial.

Mark: That’s also helping our ISO14001 efforts, because previously 80%-90% of these documents are issued to the factory floor and they get printed off multiple times on an on-going basis. And they’re being accessed by PC’s that were already there, so that is a clear and quite major saving. Every single user from the Plant Manager,

down to operators on the shop floor have got the Singlepoint icon on their desktops and they've all been trained on how to find documents in the system and it's working really well.

**Andrew: You've had fantastic adoption of the system; what do you put that down to?** Mark: one of the things we know we did right was that we did not launch the system until we ourselves were totally happy with it in terms of performance, population of the database and a training program being developed ready to go as soon as the system went live. We had a very clear vision of how we wanted Singlepoint to work and we laid that out in the system. We even did things like creating the Singlepoint log in names as the same as their main TRW log in – just to make it as easy as possible. Then we identified one line initially and implemented it there thoroughly, then next we deployed it to the senior managers – and they've been through the same training program as the users – and as soon as they bought it into and could see the benefits for themselves they then wanted to implement it in their own departments and areas

Stella: The key is you need plan up front – you need to know what documents you want to put into the system, how they interlink, how they fall onto each other. The document numbering system is critical; we designed a logical naming/numbering schema so that users can instantly recognise the type of document just from its number. The plan is key; the product Singlepoint works but it's only going to be as good as the implementation.

**Andrew: How would you rate the training and support you got from Synchronology in setting up your system and in helping you get going?** Stella: the training was excellent. The trainer Julie Stevenson was outstanding as she was able to put across the information in a way that you could absorb and you felt like you could ask her anything at all and she would take you through it carefully again. We were supported brilliantly throughout the process.

Mark: Any teething issues we had were addressed very quickly by Andy Greenhalgh and Paul Alston. Issues were sorted out quickly and we were all greatly impressed with the commitment that Synchronology showed to us to get the system implemented as quickly as possible and to respond to our requirements urgently.

Stella: All of that meant that we hit our launch date of summer 2010 go-live; we said in the summer shut-down that we would strip all the paper copies back and be ready to deploy Singlepoint after the shut-down ended. There was a period of three weeks where we operated both the paper systems and Singlepoint but then we went completely live and it went very smoothly indeed.

**Andrew: What do the users say about Singlepoint?** The comments from the shop floor users were great. We had people quickly adopting the system for locating documents and they could see the improvements in terms of efficiency and they were great at spreading the word to the other users as to how easy Singlepoint was to use, how quickly they could find documents, how they didn't miss the old paper based system and the old electronic folders – it was great. And a nice side-effect was that people who might not ordinarily have communicated any issues with the documents were calling us up to report items which could be improved in a document and that was kind of surprising the level people now want to be involved, which is also very useful to the business.

Mark: The audit trail in Singlepoint is also really useful. We can track back to see who has accessed certain documents, or not as the case may be, and compare that to issues that we may have had on the line and it's been a very useful training tool in that regard.

**Andrew: How many users in total are now accessing their documents through Singlepoint?** It's on 25 PC's on the shop floor and then all of the PC's in the plant. At any one point in time there'll be a minimum of 20 users pulling documentation from the system and at busy times up to around 50 simultaneous users, because they're constantly pulling Master Reference Documents, Tooling Drawings, Setting Inspections etc, i.e. documents that we use constantly as part of running the business.

**Andrew: If Singlepoint disappeared tomorrow, do you think people would miss it?** Stella: Yes, very much so. People would miss it because they've very quickly become used to getting their documents from Singlepoint and of course we (in Quality) would miss it greatly. For instance, I can issue a document now and it's done in about 10 minutes as opposed to about 1 hour. And when you're issuing maybe a group of four or five documents at a time it was previously a major task – now it's quick, easy and secure. So yes, I think we would all miss it greatly. We've very quickly come to rely on it.

Mark: Our ISO/TS auditor was really impressed with the system as well. We gave him a full demonstration of the system and it totally fulfils all of the requirements of the standard, so that was really pleasing. It will also help us with our environmental management system because we showed the ISO14001 auditor the system and again he was very impressed. So far we've not shown the system to a customer but we would really look forward to that and our corporate auditors have seen Singlepoint now a couple of times and they've been very happy with the system.

Mark: We've found the alerts system very useful. For example, we know the instant that a document has been checked out for editing by a document controller at a department level and we can ensure that that process is followed through in a timely manner. I've also created a folder in Singlepoint called "BMS" (business management systems) and this contains all our policies and procedures, all the templates and forms. The work on that is still on-going as the business is still deciding how it wants to implement an integrated management system, but Singlepoint will be a key tool in the deployment of whatever is decided.

Stella: We're still learning things about the system but overall it's a very, very simple system and saves us so much time. The users on the shop-floor have simple view and print access, so they can't do anything wrong with a document – we've told them not to worry about anything because they can't delete or alter a document accidentally – and that's made people more comfortable in using it because they know that can't break it. The watermarking feature in Singlepoint helps us greatly to maintain control over printed copies. The fact that we're getting a lot more feedback from these users about the actual content is telling me that they're seeing these documents properly now, they're actually using them and they want to report any improvement opportunities in the content etc. We weren't getting that before, so that tells its own story doesn't it? The next step will be devolve more and more of the ownership of the content to a department level, but that will come in time.