

Configurability Use Cases

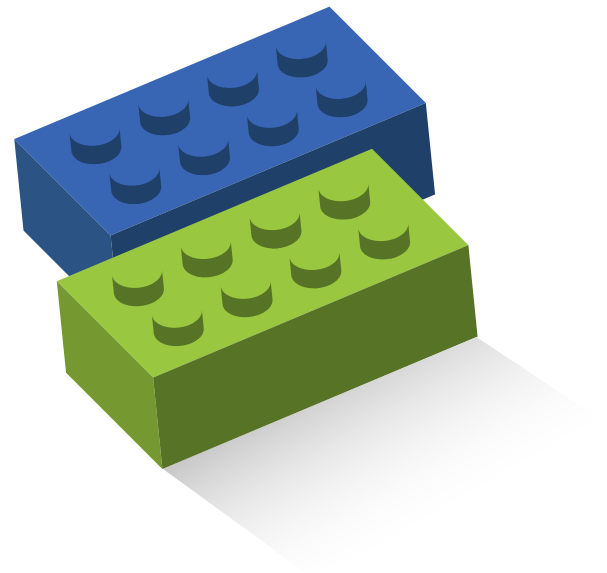
Why you want configurability
in your EHS software



There is a lot of discussion by many software vendors touting the benefits of configurability in their software (including Locus). But what does that really mean for customers?

LNS Research, a leading research and advisory firm, summed it up nicely in a [blog](#) from a few years ago and summarized below:

- ◇ **Out-of-the-Box:** Any functionality that comes shipped directly from the software vendor or can be configured easily (where “easily” means configured by a business, not IT user) with built-in tools provided by the vendor.
- ◇ **Configurable:** Any functionality that can be created using built-in tools shipped by the vendor. To be considered configurable, functionality should be forward-compatible with future releases (very important!).
- ◇ **Customizable:** Any functionality that is configured using built-in workflow tools shipped by the vendor, but may not be forward compatible with future releases. Others have stated “customizable” generally involves software developers to code the new functionality unique to the customer.



Why Configurability Matters

At Locus, we discuss customer software needs on a daily basis. It is highly unusual that someone wants exactly what we have out-of-the-box. In fact, it almost never happens. Moreover, if we see this daily, most software vendors see this as well. Both LNS Research and NAEM (in an excellent research paper titled “[Ready, Set, Implement: How to Successfully Deploy an EHS&S Software System](#)”) note that customizations can be problematic due to the cost of the software coding effort and the lack of forward compatibility. They also note that configuration is a much more desired approach allowing the customer the freedom to obtain a customized application without the costs or issues associated with actual software custom programming.

When Locus set to upgrade our decade old environmental portal, the number one requirement for our developers was to create a configurable platform that customers, consultants, or vendors could configure to meet the highly varied requirements of customers in any industry sector. This flexibility defines the Locus Platform today, where we can accommodate such varied applications as Purchase Order approval, waste tracking, incidents, and drinking water sampling and reporting – all using the exact same configurable base software and only varying by the design of the configuration.

This is why configurability matters and why you want configurable software even if you don’t want to configure it today. It leaves open the possibility of easy future changes and use by completely different departments at your company. It truly is one stop shopping!

Some real use cases taking advantage of easily configurable software

Here are some real customer use cases where configuration was the key to the success of the project.



Replace unwieldy SharePoint Ops data collection with simple to use forms

A leading U.S. manufacturer of corn-based products needed a smarter, more efficient tool to capture, track, notify, and report daily Clean Air Act Title V compliance parameters for numerous emission sources and points at their various production facilities, and replace a SharePoint-based process that was not simple or robust enough for their needs. They wanted very specific ops data collection forms matching their exact permit requirements. Moreover, they needed flexibility to update them as regulatory requirements changed.

How did configurability solve their problem? – The Locus Platform allowed iterative, streamlined configuration of data entry forms with built-in validation to match the customer’s specific business needs and nomenclature. The flexibility and ease of configuration, including standardized rules and validations, allowed the company to streamline a previously cumbersome and error-prone process and gain user acceptance in record time.

[Read the case study >](#)

Unexpected project need - Integration with external data system and configured review workflow with documents

For a complex Superfund site with multiple stakeholders, Locus Platform was configured to maintain a consolidated document repository, and provide instant access to analytical data through integration with the Locus EIM database. The platform streamlined the review process between regulators and stakeholders, with a configured workflow that allowed all parties to track the review status of environmental documents. This eliminated hundreds of emails between the parties, and provided a concise dashboard to monitor the status of all of the site's environmental communications. Because Locus Platform is a cloud software, everyone (including guest regulators) had easy access and applicable permissions.

How did configurability solve their problem? – They were able to use an existing system to meet an emergent project need, with little effort, which saved the project about 400 labor hrs. for a one-time event that did not merit a separate purchased solution.



Highly custom LIMS and field sampling application – configured to specs

A large metropolitan water utility wanted to replace an aging 20-year old highly custom self-built system that included mobile data collection, microbiology lab information management (LIMS) and integrated automatic reporting for a large number of complex regulatory formatted outputs. Commercial “off the shelf” software was simply not available.

How did configurability solve their problem? – The water utility was able to get a highly unique system configured to their exact specifications without taking on a huge and expensive system development project. Plus, because the system was configurable, they were able to update reports and forms when the regulations changed, and add completely new functionality (customer complaints) that were siloed paper processes.

Replacement for a “bunch of spreadsheets and Access databases”

A large municipal water company wanted to replace a lot of homegrown spreadsheets and databases that were managed by a single person with little quality assurance, backup or auditability. Because the activities being tracked were unique EHS compliance tasks, commercial software solutions were not a good option and they had no desire to build internal IT systems for a limited number of users and specialized use cases.

How did configurability solve their problem? – They opted to build the various apps (such as sewer discharges, watershed maintenance, and flushing truck discharges) in Locus Platform using their own staff. Because the configuration tools are fully exposed in Locus Platform and they do not require software developer skills, they were able to build (and continue to do so) apps that exactly matched their requirements and were instantly mobile enabled for their field teams.



Find a scalable platform for IoT data from a fast growing number of electronic devices

What do you do with over 200 electronic devices, where the device number is increasing exponentially on a monthly basis, that capture various readings every 5 minutes and you need a scalable database solution? You look for an IoT based SaaS solution that can handle the volume of data coming in and allows the data to be integrated using the latest and best of class technology stack available through APIs, Java, and HTML5. This customer also needed a way to intelligently display this data through quick dashboards and reports in tabular and graphical ways to its customers so the data can be easily interpreted and decisions be made to make the proper adjustments to the pipes and devices.

How did configurability solve their problem? Locus Platform was designed to be scalable and easily integrate with external devices or databases and met their need out of the box. Locus' Platform solutions also had a wide array of portlet types and reports that were configured by both Locus and the customer who took advantage of access to the configuration tools to get their perfect solution. Moreover, as their business grows and changes, new apps can be easily configured without the need for additional software purchases.

Create a highly specific financial approval work flow with easy external vendor access

A Fortune 100 company had a business need to streamline the process of purchase orders, invoicing approvals and submittals to add transparency and management tools to the approval and payment process. They also wanted improved budget tracking tools to avoid budget surprises for all parties.

How did configurability solve their problem? Locus Platform provided the company with a blank canvas to build from the ground up the data input forms, workflows, notifications, integration with SAP and reporting needed to meet their highly specific critical business requirements. The stakeholders for this application are able to better track status of these various records and documents over time and quickly discover issues with funding and proper submittals by the streamlined reports provided to them. Configurability provided a highly custom solution at a fraction of the cost of custom development and its ongoing maintenance.

Want to read more on configurability?

Check out some of Locus' recent blogs on the powers of configurable software.

- ◇ [EHS Compliance Software: The difference between configurability and customization](#)
- ◇ [Thinking of buying configurable EHS software? Make sure to focus on the right questions](#)

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