



## Case study – Van Leeuwen Pipe and Tube Group

# Van Leeuwen Pipe and Tube Group drive a global culture focused on quality with ISO 9001:2015 certification from LRQA

Steel pipe and tube applications specialist highlights organisational benefits of the new international quality standard and role of Lloyd's Register in managing a transition across a global multi-site organisation.

**VAN LEEUWEN**



### Introduction

Following their transitional assessment in October 2015, Van Leeuwen Pipe and Tube Group became the first organisation in continental Europe to achieve certification against the recently revised international Quality Management System (QMS) standard, ISO 9001:2015. Certification was formally presented to the team at Van Leeuwen on 11 December 2015.



### Developing a strategy: The journey to ISO 9001:2015

Founded in 1924, with 40 branches over four continents, the Van Leeuwen Pipe and Tube Group is a global specialist in steel pipes and pipe and tube applications. Headquartered in the Netherlands, Van Leeuwen were first certified against ISO 9000:1994 by LRQA in 1998.

The planning for ISO 9001:2015 began in 2013 when the newly revised standard was only just beginning its own journey in the six stage revision process laid out by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Eric Veraart, Corporate Supply Chain Manager & QSE at Van Leeuwen spoke about the decision to plan for their transition at such an early stage in the revisions process; "Quality has been embedded within Van Leeuwen since the 1970's so everybody across the group knows about quality."

With quality at the heart of all that Van Leeuwen does, gaining support from senior management was the top priority for Van Leeuwen Executive Director, Maureen van Engelen; "Starting with our Global Management Team and Quality Managers, we made sure that everyone was on board with

the plan to achieve ISO 9001:2015 because it wouldn't be possible without everyone working together."

"All of our senior managers were involved in our plans from the very beginning. We communicated with our employees in bulletins, on our intranet and in person to get their feedback and ideas. Involving them at each stage in the process really embeds quality into their roles and makes everyone responsible for the management system," Maureen continued.

Gaining support from the global management team signalled the start of a two year journey for the quality team at Van Leeuwen. Starting with employee engagement initiatives at both a global and regional level, the team gathered valuable insight and feedback from the employees across the group which helped to shape the strategy and transition plan for the group.

### Areas of focus

With both new and revised areas introduced by the revision to ISO 9001, the quality team had a number of decisions to make about which areas to focus on first when planning their transition to ISO 9001:2015.



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“When we looked at our strategy, objectives and core values, there was no one area that to us took precedence over another,” explained Eric about the Van Leeuwen’s balanced, holistic approach to the transition.

“Rather than looking at each new or changed area in isolation, we approached it from a different perspective and changed our thinking.”

#### Continuous Improvement and working with LRQA

With a QMS spanning 40 branches, and an organisational culture focused on quality, the quality team and the Board and Executive Committee at Van Leeuwen are highly critical of every aspect within their QMS, rigorously planning the audit schedule and themes annually to ensure that every aspect of it is covered during their surveillance visits.

Maureen went on to explain how the LRQA assessment process supported the group drive towards continuous improvement, “We really like LRQA to be very critical, we learn from this and discover what we can do better to improve our quality team, as well as improve quality across the group. “We have a strong relationship with LRQA and moving to the new standard, it was quite a partnership.”

Jakko de Jong, LRQA Assessor & Assessment Manager, worked with Van Leeuwen throughout their journey to ISO 9001:2015 and he explained why training and coaching can help organisations make the transition journey a smoother process;

“Our assessors have an in-depth understanding of Van Leeuwen and their QMS. This allows us to provide support that is best suited to help them transition to 9001:2015. In addition to our assessment services, we have provided extensive training to Van Leeuwen’s quality teams, helping them identify any potential gaps in their transition planning journey.”

Van Leeuwen and LRQA have a long-standing relationship which started over 17 years ago when Van Leeuwen first achieved QMS certification. Speaking of the relationship, Maureen said, “We have a long history with LRQA which means that their assessors understand our business very well.”

Explaining why the Van Leeuwen group have chosen to work with LRQA to support their transition journey, Maureen said, “Having our QMS certified by LRQA is essential as it allows us to further demonstrate our commitment to providing the highest level of quality to our customers. Whether through our products or processes, they can be sure that we have been independently assessed and closely scrutinised against an internationally recognised standard.”

#### About Van Leeuwen

The Van Leeuwen Pipe and Tube Group is a multi-national specialist in steel pipes and pipe and tube applications, offering a broad range of pipe and tube products and customised services using a network of stock-keeping branches to customers in the Industry and Energy sectors.



With quality at the heart of everything the group does, they devote a great deal of attention and time to the continuous improvement of work processes and practices, in which the quality of the product range and safe and healthy working conditions are a priority. Sustainability plays a key role in the design of Van Leeuwen’s processes. As part of the ongoing commitment to quality and continuous improvement, all new sites within Van Leeuwen are integrated into the group QMS within three years.

#### About LRQA

LRQA is a recognised, world leading professional assurance services organisation. We specialise in management systems compliance and expert advice across a broad spectrum of standards, schemes and customised assurance programmes. We unlock the power of management systems to improve organisational performance and reduce risk.

LRQA was one of the first certification bodies to be awarded global accreditation by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) for ISO 9001:2015. Through our extensive range of training and assessment services, LRQA is helping organisations worldwide transition to the revised ISO standards.

“With a global operation, it’s important that we get both a high level view of our management system and support at a local level, which LRQA can offer us. The global reach of LRQA means that we are confident that we are applying the same high standard of quality across the entire Van Leeuwen group”

Maureen van Engelen  
Executive Director  
Van Leeuwen Pipe and Tube Group

To find out more about LRQA’s services, please visit us at [www.lrqa.nl](http://www.lrqa.nl) or contact us at [info@lrqa.nl](mailto:info@lrqa.nl)

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