

Celanese Global Credit Manager Mark Walker's Formula for Innovation: Automation + Diverse Data = Powerful Risk Mitigation



Celanese Corporation's tagline is "The chemistry inside innovation." That describes not just the products, but the people—including the global credit group led by **Global Credit Manager Mark Walker**. Mark and his team are driving innovation through processes, automation and use of diverse data sources as they provide critical support for the company's entire business.

Celanese, founded in 1918, is a Fortune 500 company and a global technology leader in the production of specialty materials and chemical products that are used in most major industries and consumer applications. Based in Dallas, Texas, the company is one of the world's largest producers of acetyl products, intermediate chemicals used in nearly every major industry. It is also a leading global producer of high performance engineered polymers used in a variety of high-value applications. It employs about 7,400 employees around the world, primarily in North America, Europe and Asia.

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A FAST GROWTH ENVIRONMENT

Celanese is growing fast, with revenue of over \$6.8B, recently closing a record Q4 in 2014 and exceeding earnings per share in the first quarter of 2015. The credit team Mark leads plays an important role in driving that growth—and he's justifiably proud of that. "Credit is considered a critical function at Celanese," he says. "We are viewed as an essential business partner and support all businesses, including the procurement team."

Mark heads a worldwide team of experienced credit professionals in locations as diverse as Germany, Brazil and China. Their primary mission is to manage risk to the over-all company. They assess risk of customers and vendors globally, review contracts and set payment terms—with a particular eye on high-risk accounts. The team is highly experienced—Mark himself has an MBA along with 25 years of experience in finance,

AT A GLANCE

Company:

Celanese, a \$6.8B Fortune 500 chemical industry leader

User:

Mark Walker, Global Credit Manager

Challenge:

- Manage risk globally across the entire business
- Assess customers and vendors around the world, including Europe and Asia
- Review contracts and set payment terms

Solution:

- SAP's credit management module along with diverse information sources
- CreditRiskMonitor is their first stop for risk assessment and research
- Use the entire service—from scores to company reports to debt payables and more
- Also contribute trade data to monitor their own accounts receivable—Mark is a fan of the "hidden slow payers" report, which highlights accounts that pay you well but others slowly

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analysis, systems development and organizational development, in addition to his credit expertise.

KEYS TO CREDIT SUCCESS

Mark sees a few keys to the team's success. A primary one is automation, including the use of credit scores. Since arriving at Celanese almost 12 years ago, he has been instrumental in leading the move to SAP's automated accounts receivable module, which he loves. "It streamlines our work and makes us more productive," he says. The team combines SAP with an in-house scoring model to prioritize risk. "We consider our model, our team, and our approach a real advantage," Mark says. "We're almost to the point where we can automatically evaluate customers to mitigate risk. We had record low losses during the last economic crisis."

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An absolutely essential piece of the team's approach is using diverse data sources. Mark believes in multiple perspectives and using the right data for the right purpose. He uses a variety of broad-based and industry information sources—with CreditRiskMonitor as the team's first stop.

CREDITRISKMONITOR WORKS FOR THE TEAM

"We love CreditRiskMonitor," he says. "It compactly gives us the data we want in a standard format, and helps us stay cutting edge. We have avoided a lot of bankruptcies." He has been using the service since the early 2000s and brought it to Celanese when he joined the company. "I have been a fan every since I first started using it!" he says.

In addition to having information from CreditRiskMonitor fed into SAP, the team uses most aspects of the service regularly. "We look at debt payables, all the scores and the company overall snapshot," he says. "When I'm researching a company, it's the first place I go. The big benefit is it's all standardized in presentation, and it's global. I cannot use something U.S.-centric with our business. I also find the corporate linkage very helpful."

In addition, Celanese is a trade tape program participant, and provides their accounts receivables to CreditRiskMonitor. Mark regularly looks at the risk analysis provided back, and is a particular fan of the "hidden slow payers" risk reports. "I use those every month," he says.

WISH LIST AND ADVICE

His advice for other customers? Make sure you're getting the most you can out of the service—and definitely go to a user group meeting if you can! "The user groups are very helpful. There is no replacing face-to-face networking. They are great and you should have more of them." He's even sponsored one at his location and encourages other users to do the same. (If you're interested in this possibility—please reach out to VP of Client Services, Kellyanne Tavani, at kellyannet@crmz.com.)

Mark's wish list for CreditRiskMonitor is simple—stay on top of what's next and continue to support the team's strategic focus on automation. "Automation, combined with the right data, has made our department and our industry much more proactive. We can look forward and be predictive instead of depending on history. It would be nice to use cloud computing to be able to deliver more information without going to the CRMZ web site. That would definitely benefit us."

We look forward to continuing to support Mark, his team and all of Celanese as they create the chemistry that enriches all of our everyday lives. Thank you for using CreditRiskMonitor!

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