Cooper Standard deploys lab informatics platform to synchronize R&D
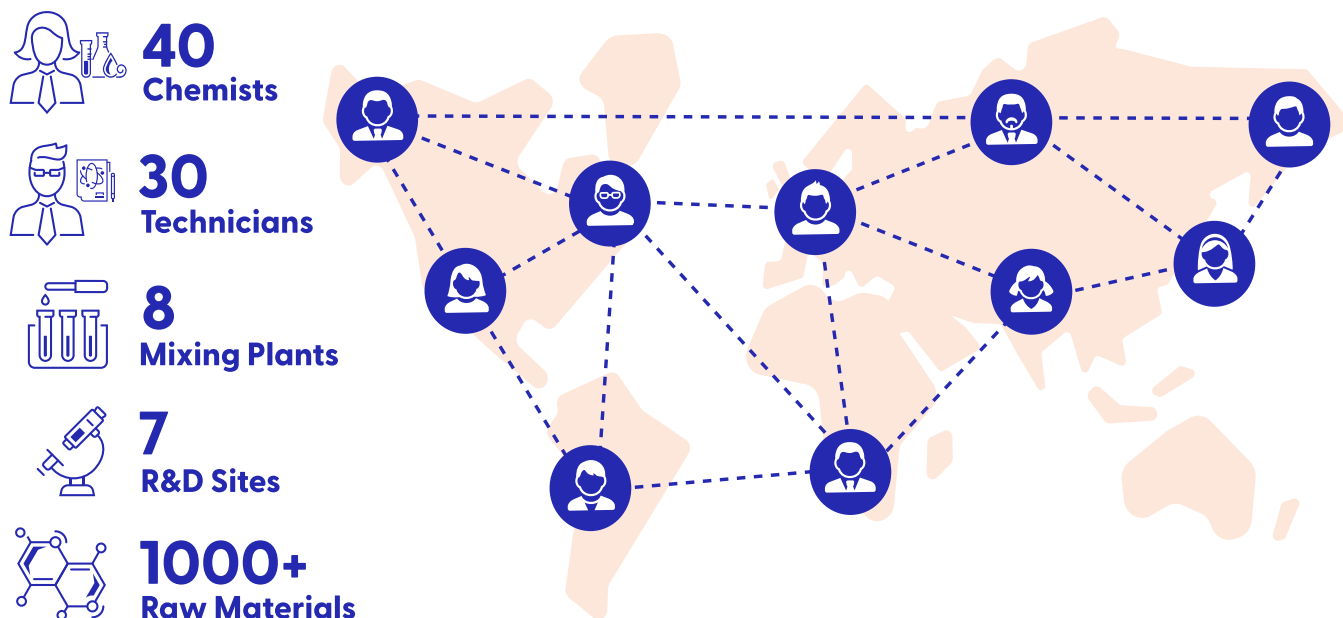
Cooper Standard is a leading global supplier of systems and components for the automotive industry, including sealing, fuel and brake delivery, and fluid transfer systems. The company employs nearly 25,000 people, about 80 of which are chemists spread across the globe on R&D teams. To develop new formulations that meet customer requirements, Cooper Standard chemists rely on extensive libraries of ingredients that have to be combined in specific ways and processed into new formulations in order to meet multiple end-performance requirements. So the challenge of having all data related to ingredients, formulations, process conditions and end performance applications was an important problem to solve, and one that Cooper Standard chose to tackle with the Uncountable Platform.

When the company began using Uncountable, they were mostly managing their materials data in disparate Excel sheets and outdated region-specific softwares. Chemists in each region were using their own languages and formats to track the details of experiments and recipes. "It was very hard to trace all of the developments and measurements," says Jean-Marc Veillé, Senior Global Materials Director at Cooper Standard. "We needed a way to cross-check information and ensure we're all working from the same knowledge base."

"Uncountable gives us a one-stop solution for all of the data our chemists need, from raw materials to recipes, properties, and production information."

Cooper Standard's materials team creates at least 600 recipes a year for 30 development projects. In past years they had already made one attempt to consolidate their global database of raw materials and recipes with a homegrown system developed by a third party with little experience in the materials space. However, they failed to fully adopt the system due to a complicated rollout and slow response times to issues. After moving to Uncountable with a few special projects, the team decided to wholesale embrace the new platform. The materials team is now able to quickly access and share data on raw materials, recipes, and experiment history in a connected workspace supported by Uncountable.
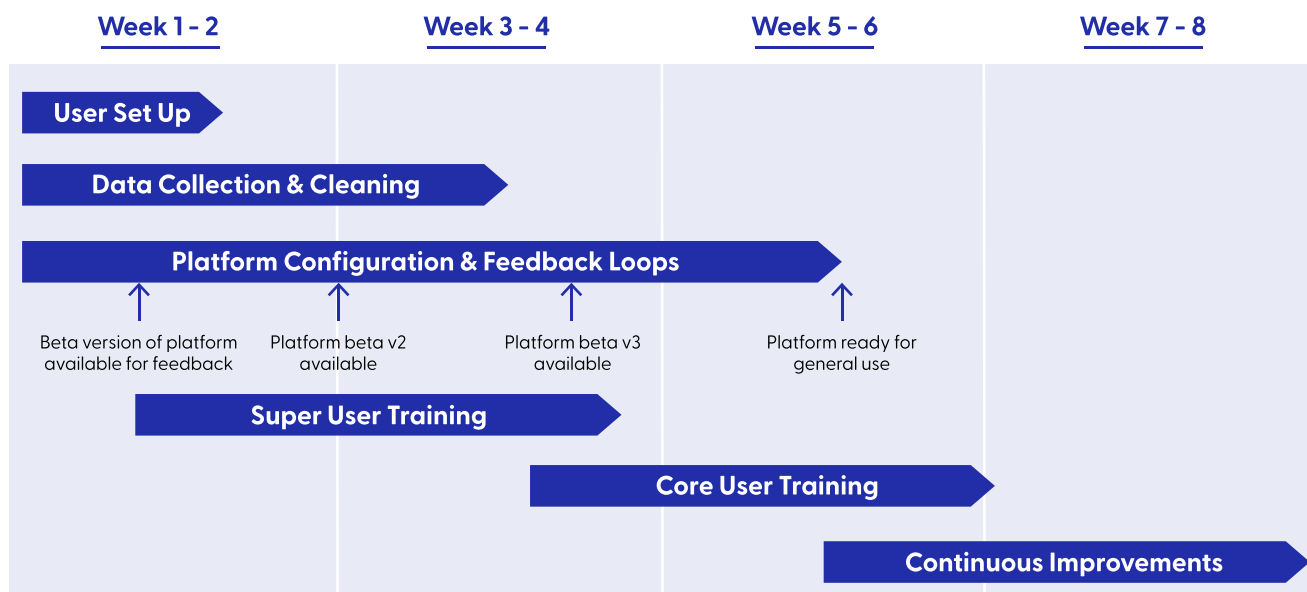
40 Chemists

30 Technicians

8 Mixing Plants

7 R&D Sites

1000+ Raw Materials

Leaving the development black box behind

Before moving to Uncountable, the team at Cooper Standard worked in siloes with very little historical data from their colleagues to build upon. When one chemist developed a recipe—a process that could take months or years—they recorded it in a spreadsheet and moved onto the next project. When a chemist from another region tried to use that recipe, they would have no experimental history to help them understand how their counterpart achieved that performance and what they learned in the process. Cooper Standard like many others was also using SAP as an ERP system to manage up-to-date pricing information, which was difficult to integrate with existing tools. In this old environment, it took extraordinary effort to find and unify data from past development work, especially if it was necessary to synthesize data across raw material batches, formula iterations and end-use applications. It was not unusual to spend over 50% of researcher time searching and combining the data to analyze and develop new experimental plans. In addition it often led to the company repeating experiments over and over in different regions, a frustrating waste of time and resources.

The materials team had tried to streamline their process and record more standardized experiment data by investing in a global software solution, but the first attempt didn't hit the mark. They needed something that could adapt quickly to the right workflows and was easy and powerful to use, a solution that wouldn't drive frustrated chemists back to the very spreadsheets they wanted to leave behind.

Uncountable rollout timeline

Week 1 - 2	Week 3 - 4	Week 5 - 6	Week 7 - 8

User Set Up

Data Collection & Cleaning

Platform Configuration & Feedback Loops

Beta version of platform available for feedback

Platform beta v2 available

Platform beta v3 available

Platform ready for general use

Super User Training

Core User Training

Continuous Improvements

Moving to the Uncountable platform

"When we started talking to Uncountable, we were looking for something very user friendly that could help ease the friction our team experienced with solutions in the past," explains Benoit Beaubreuil, Material Data Engineer at Cooper Standard. The materials group discussed their goals with the Uncountable onboarding team. They needed to eliminate the discrepancies caused by different languages and formats in their materials data. Chemists from every region should be able to access standardized information, without needing to struggle with translations or run repeat experiments. A collaborative approach in the early stages helped to create a common shared vision of success and alignment inside Cooper Standard, as well as between Cooper Standard and the Uncountable team.
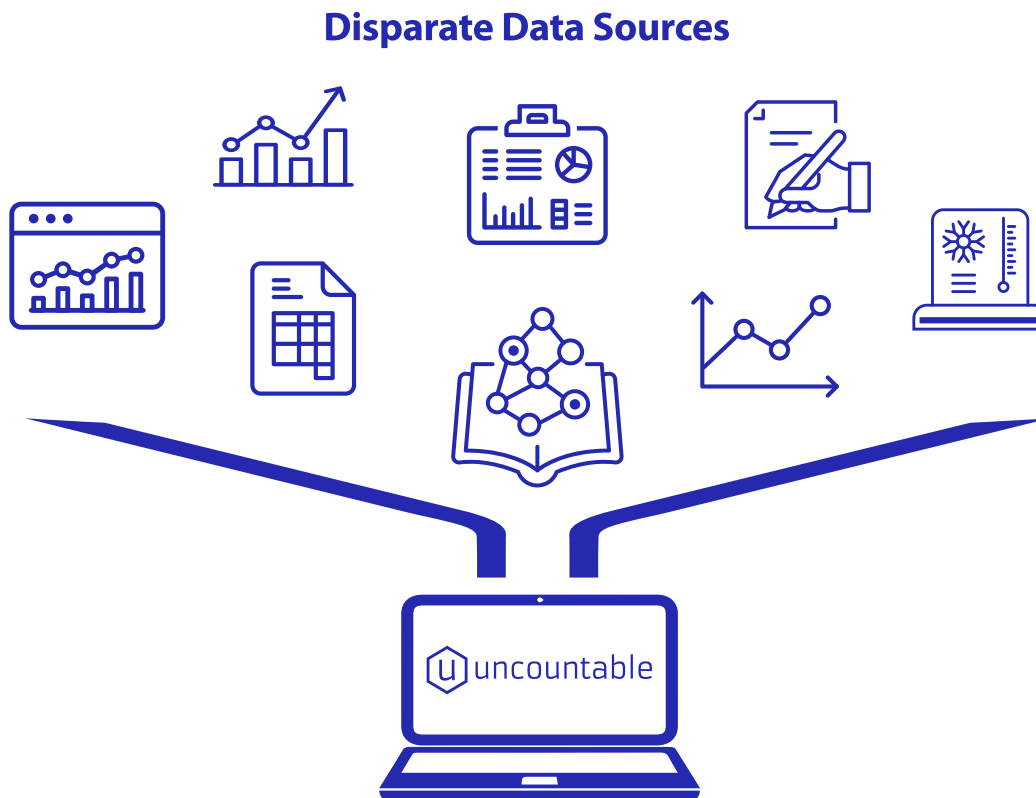
As they moved ahead, the heavy-lifting of implementation was managed by the Uncountable onboarding specialists, requiring just half of a dedicated resource from Cooper Standard to guide the process. Uncountable helped Cooper Standard design the best workflows for their distributed team of chemists. Onboarding specialists gathered information from every region and advised the materials team on which features and modules would suit their needs. It made adopting Uncountable easy for the team, says Beaubreuil. "They took the time to understand what we needed and still got us up and running on an initial version in six weeks."

**"Uncountable's implementation was the best I've seen.
They were incredibly responsive."**

Connecting global team members through data

Cooper Standard is a large organization with many technical systems in place. The materials team wanted to connect these systems, making it easier to share data between departments and eliminate duplicate work. To keep data secure, they also wanted to put flexible permissions in place based on the role and region of each user. Adopting Uncountable was the first, crucial step toward these goals.

Disparate Data Sources

For Beaubreuil, the vision is clear. "We want our chemists to only have to work in Uncountable. They'll be able to enter and search for experiment data, connect with SAP to see pricing of raw materials, and send a formula straight to the mixing team from one centralized platform. Whether they're working in China or Mexico, they should be able to maintain global material connectivity while making plant-specific adjustments."

"Now our chemists can learn from one another's experiments rather than working from incomplete data."

Measuring success afterward

Tracking KPIs is of high priority to the Cooper Standard team. In addition to a new system of record, they see Uncountable as a path to understanding how well their workflows are serving company goals.

"After implementing Uncountable, reporting and metrics become crucial," says Beaubreuil. The team now uses data from the platform to merge or eliminate the least-used materials from their list of about 1,000 globally. Having granular, standardized data on raw materials and the manufacturers they're purchased from also help them streamline sourcing across the company.

For Cooper Standard, the value of moving to Uncountable is clearly productivity. Chemists no longer have to maintain and interpret dozens of mismatched spreadsheets. Using a single source of trusted data, anyone with the right permissions can access the experiment data they need to work efficiently. The materials team also uses Uncountable's charts and analytics to quickly understand what analysis is needed.

**"The Uncountable visualizations are robust and seamless with the data. It takes two clicks to get whatever information you need. It saves us countless hours over the course of a project. I can see a full list of raw materials with a single export. It used to take weeks to get this information."
- Beaubreuil**

When they came to Uncountable, Cooper Standard's diverse team of chemists needed a truly agile partner that understood the nuances of their global workflows. After a smooth implementation, the Cooper Standard team members found themselves with **at least 4 hours each week free to focus on other tasks**. It became clear that Uncountable was the partner that would allow them to finally leave spreadsheets behind and embrace global collaboration.

For more details contact us at: info@uncountable.com