

Developing tailored systems for our customers

Kathryn Coleman is manager of the Tecan Integration Group (TIG) in North Carolina, US, responsible for the development and construction of the systems featured on pages 20–21 for Columbia University. We talked to her about Tecan's unique approach to customizing products for customers who need just that little bit extra than off-the-shelf solutions.

Tell us about the TIG facility in North Carolina.

I am the manager of the facility at Tecan's US base in Research Triangle Park, leading a team of hardware and software specialists who are dedicated to customizing Tecan products for our customers, from biopharma, biotech and forensic laboratories. Our facility here consists of a large laboratory integration area that can handle multiple system set-ups.

Apart from the TIG team, who else gets involved with customization projects?

A team leader is assigned to each individual project and it is their job to coordinate the team effort at Tecan. This leader manages the project, working closely with the sales, engineering, software and development teams, and also with the field applications staff within Tecan. The whole process begins with comprehensive discussions with the customer and the sales person to fully understand what is required and how we can achieve the best outcome, in time and in budget. Then, together, the whole

team develops a solution that exactly meets each customer's requirements.

So, why customize?

The Tecan product portfolio includes really good, flexible, off-the-shelf systems that are just what many of our customers need from their instruments. For the remaining few, the base platforms often meet 90% of a customer's requirements but what makes us unique in the life science liquid handling arena is our in-house capability to customize them and provide that extra 10% of functionality. It may not sound a lot but, for some of our customers, it's the difference that makes a good instrument even better; the icing on the cake!

What does customization usually entail?

That varies tremendously depending on the complexity of what is required. For some customers, it's just a simple matter of making a custom-carrier for more unusual sample tubes or vessels. Others may want to integrate third party equipment and we can make adapter plates and drivers to integrate them into our standard Freedom EVOware® software. The really complex cases like that of Columbia University are major projects. For those systems, we developed the specifications, designed



Project managers at work

several custom hardware parts, wrote and integrated dedicated drivers, and programmed several protocol templates. It wasn't just a hardware set-up, but also the programming, testing and verification. These final stages are, of course, critical parts of every customization project, whatever its size. At the end of the day, we aim to deliver a system that meets all the customers' specifications and does exactly what the customer needs it to do – that's what customization is all about!

“ The whole team develops a solution that exactly meets each customer's requirements ”



Kathryn Coleman, Manager Tecan Integration Group (TIG) US