♣ SOLMEK

Solmek Needed a Laboratory Management Information System that Would Meet Growing Demand for Accreditation.

Here's how Keynetix helped them do just that.

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**Solmek are
using these Keynetix products:**

• **KeyLAB HoleBASE SI Professional**

• **HoleBASE SI Standard**

•**HoleBASE SI Extension for Microsoft Excel**

• **HoleBASE SI Template Studio**

• **KeyAGS**

BUSINESS SITUATION

An Excel based Laboratory Management System can be powerful. But if indiividuals can make untracked changes to the resutls, then accreditation can be unattainable. This was the challenge facing Stockton-on-Tees based geotechnical contractor Solmek and its in-house soil laboratory, when it first decided to apply for UKAS accreditation for some of their test procedures in 2012.

THE TECHNICAL REALITY

The complexity of geotechnical testing means it does not fit the traditional Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) approach. As a result, there are very few software packages available for geotechnical work.

KeyLAB uses one protected worksheets (so only the system administrator can change it) for inputting test results. Data can be exported into AGS format and into client-specific report templates.

"**KeyLAB** makes everyone work off the same sheet, which is important for consistency, gives us more control and, because it creates a 'virtual' paper trail, everything is traceable," Nicholson says

"As **KeyLAB** is Excel based, we were able to retain the format of our worksheets and the look of our reports. It could also be implemented simply and quickly, with a shallow learning curve for the team."

THE BENEFITS

The investment paid off, as Solmek has achieved accreditation for a suite of classification tests. It also helped 'future-proof' the laboratory operation, giving the ability to manage larger and more complex jobs more easily. And, when the decision was taken in 2016 to increase the number of accredited tests, the accreditation process was much more straightforward.

"Almost half of the laboratory's work is for external clients and we needed to widen our accreditation, to meet their demands for more complex testing," Nicholson explains. "Because we were using **KeyLAB**, it was relatively simple to apply our accredited procedures to triaxial, consolidatiion and compaction testing."

Solmek was awarded its additional accreditation at the end of 2016 and Nicholson says the company is well placed to continue to grow, in particular by expanding its external client base.

❝ We have had to evolve to meet client demands over the past five years. Not only has **KeyLAB** helped us to achieve accreditation but data entry is also much easier, saving huge amounts of time, particularly on larger jobs. Reports are also faster to produce - we can get them out in hours, rather than days.❞

Ian Nicholson, Technical Manager, SOLMEK

Laboratory managers often resort to either using a LIMS designed for other types of testing or, more often than not, run their entire operation on Excel spreadsheets. Solmek Technical Manager Ian Nicholson explains "Although Excel had served us well, it was clear we needed a laboratory management system to ensure we achieved accreditation and could continue to grow".

THE SOLUTION

Solmek decided to invest in **KeyLAB**, a geotechnical laboratory management system developed by Keynetix.

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