

TAKING CONTROL: HOW RWE NPOWER MANAGES £2.5BN OF PROJECTS WITH THE HELP OF CORPORATE PROJECT SOLUTIONS & MICROSOFT EPM



RWE npower is an integrated energy business, generating electricity and supplying gas, electricity and related services to nearly 7 million customers across the UK. A division of the RWE Group, one of Europe's five largest utility companies, RWE npower's retail business, npower, is a principal supplier of electricity and gas within the UK, producing more than 10% of the electricity used within England and Wales.

As the contracted supplier of Information Systems and Procurement services to RWE npower, RWE IT UK plays a central role in initiating IT solutions to aid business development. Formed in April 2007, RWE IT UK consists of 1,300 employees and contractors based in 13 different sites across the UK, with goals to improve customer experience, optimise IT delivery costs, share best practice and improve quality.

As a contractible provider, RWE IT UK customers include the Generation Projects team who manage a portfolio of key RWE infrastructure projects that form a major programme of power station construction and renovation worth over £2.5bn. As work on these projects is continually reviewed, the Generation Projects team identified issues with the visibility and control of work due to a lack of streamlined project management tools and processes. This deficiency led to problems establishing the status of projects in reporting progress and issues and in promoting best practice.

The Microsoft EPM system was chosen as a proven solution to ease and improve the delivery of projects. It was key that the system was based upon standardised processes and tools and would provide visibility of the performance of projects against a baseline schedule, assisted by better visibility of resource requirements. A full, formal tender evaluation process of the market leaders in provisioning Microsoft EPM solutions was undertaken by RWE IT UK, resulting in the appointment of Corporate Project Solutions.

Chris Elston, Director of Projects explained:

"Within my team of project managers, planners and support staff we had a wide variety of tools in use to give us a view of how each of our major projects was progressing. These included a number of spreadsheets, small databases, other project management tools and several versions of MS Project. With the twin goals of improving the toolsets available to the team and implementing more uniform business processes, we undertook an exercise with RWE IT to compare some of the leading collaborative project management tools. EPM was the clear choice. Given the skill level we already had with MS Project, this was a natural progression."

The objectives of the implementation were to standardise on a single toolset, improve the business processes underlying projects, simplify reporting tasks, improve risk and issue management and improve resource management. To ensure the smooth implementation of EPM, Corporate Project Solutions provided comprehensive architecting and performance optimisation, of the infrastructure, EPM process definition and end to end configuration of the EPM solution as well as the supporting training materials and delivery.

Adrian Shaw, CPS Managing Consultant explains that:

"Early on it was expressed to RWE the importance of designing and documenting a realistic and agreed EPM process, which could be used as a solid platform upon which to build the configured EPM toolset. This also enabled bespoke targeted work instructions to be designed which become the essential basis of an effective training delivery."

As with all projects, effective communication throughout the change was key. All team members were kept up to date with progress on the developments throughout the



project. During discovery workshops and review sessions, many users, from administrators, finance staff, executive staff, support functions, project managers, technology specialists and planners were involved in providing the key inputs needed to develop a system that met their exact requirements.

Karen Porter, Project Manager at RWE IT UK commenting on the start-up process observed:

"We were very impressed by the quality and speed of the response from CPS. They were instrumental in defining the scope of what was to be delivered and successfully engaged with all affected teams to ensure specific requirements were understood and addressed"

The Microsoft EPM solution deployed included Microsoft Project Server, Project Professional and Web Access 2007 and Windows SharePoint Services, where plan based data and other key project information was contained in a central repository for all projects, enabling easy collaboration and reporting across the business area. During the discovery and envisioning phase, current in-house built tools were reviewed and discussed in order to establish which ones could be utilised to enable control of various project management elements. Latterly, CPS have also been providing very valuable assistance in determining our approach to Microsoft Office SharePoint Server. With all resources contained in a central repository, Resource Managers are able to view the requirements of their resources versus availability. Resource allocation and resolution of resourcing

conflicts is now carried out by Project Managers in consultation with Resource Managers. The availability of all resources for projects now shows the actual available PM department resource levels, taking into account all project and non-project commitments.

CPS deployed a configured system based on their best practice EPMoffice® Project Server and SharePoint templates which were modified to RWE's requirements. The standardised process for controlling documents, risks and issues, now utilises Windows SharePoint Services (WSS) project workspaces for list and document management. As such, standard fields developed by CPS were employed, with any requested modifications made after each review meeting.

Training of users at all levels from administrators to team members was rolled out across the Generation Projects team. An EPM Process Guide was created to give an overview to users of how the system should be used within RWE's processes. Similarly, Work Instructions were generated to provide detailed step-by-step instructions on how to carry out the key EPM activities for each user group. These, along with customised exercises and standard training handbook content, formed the material for bespoke training courses.

Karen Porter comments:

"In engaging in this process, there is a certain 'leap of faith' which those involved must take since initially the outcome is not necessarily clear. Having taken that leap, the process throughout was positive. In particular, the emphasis on this not being merely a technical implementation, but also including reviews of the business processes and the training needs of the individuals involved, helped to ensure the successful delivery of a solution fit for purpose and with the flexibility to support future requirements."

From initial discovery workshop to the availability of the live configured system took just 4 months, with the migration of existing projects into the new system scheduled over the following few months. Within a year

of implementation, there will be an anticipated 40 project managers, and over 100 team members, plus a small executive group who will review summary information.

The main benefits of the Microsoft EPM implementation to the Generation Projects Team have been:

- ◆ The creation of a central project repository
- ◆ Development of bespoke project views enabling standardisation of project management processes
- ◆ Significantly improved progress visibility and management
- ◆ An effective document repository

"With relatively small incremental steps needed from the staff involved, we have gained large benefits in terms of process improvements, greater visibility of project status, far less administrative effort to collate the information and clearer communications within the project team and senior management of the status of projects" illustrates Chris Elston, Director of Projects.

Mike Bourne, the Project Manager responsible for the huge effort at the Didcot B power station to upgrade the plant, was one of the first to enjoy the benefits of the EPM solution. Bourne comments on the new system:

"The functionality gives us a far more open view of progress, with simple indicators from the RAG status. It massively improves communication by opening out the number of people able to see progress at a glance through Project Web Access, without the overhead of expensive licences"

As UK energy demands increase it is vital that RWE npower has complete visibility and control over its entire portfolio of projects to ensure maximum efficiency and productivity across the business. The EPM solution has provided a platform capable of developing with the Company and enabling RWE npower to confidently tackle future projects and challenges.