

Case Study

Wolverhampton City Council

Wolverhampton
City Council



Located on a plateau bordering the Black Country, Wolverhampton has grown from a thriving market town into a vibrant Millennium city.

Major regeneration projects are transforming the city's landscape, with massive investment revitalising the centre into a lively commercial hub. The task of administering this newest of UK cities falls to the local Government authority; Wolverhampton City Council. Like many local authorities, the ability to adapt and manage change is essential to the successful development of the city.

Based in the West Midlands, Wolverhampton City Council (WCC) employs in excess of 12,000 employees with the central Civic Centre building providing the main administrative and support functions. It is within this Civic Centre that a Microsoft Enterprise Project Management implementation was rolled out from October 2007- January 2008 to a select number of the 2,000 employees based in the building.

Following in the footsteps of other authorities endeavouring to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, WCC has recently entered into a ten year strategic partnership agreement. In order to run new initiatives as well as maintain business as usual, Wolverhampton's IT department recognised that there was a need for an integrated system that would allow projects, and subsequently resources to be planned appropriately and projects prioritised accordingly. The main aim of the venture was to get a detailed view of where resources were being used, especially with the imminent arrival of the strategic partner which would lead to an increased demand for resource, all of which would require accurate management to ensure that they were utilised effectively.

Greater resource visibility results in more accurate planning



WCC looked at various different enterprise project solutions, including the Programme Management Group's Hydra product and CA's Clarity product but the decision was taken to continue with our strategic direction to standardise, where appropriate, on a Microsoft Centric operation. It was decided therefore, that the Microsoft EPM solution would transcend the requirements of the evolving local authority. The implementation would provide a solution that fitted within the existing technical architecture, whilst presenting the user with a consistent interface.

The decision was taken to enlist expert assistance in the implementation of the EPM system. After undergoing an extensive research and vetting process, the selection panel voted Corporate Project Solutions (CPS) the preferred partner and subsequently engaged their services to complete the EPM implementation.

"CPS were chosen from a number of companies because we felt that they had the experience, ability and flexibility to be able to understand our processes and requirements, relate them back to us in EPM terms and, most importantly, to work with us to fit these together in a controlled and efficient manner"

explains Paul Dunlavy, ICTS Programme Manager at Wolverhampton City Council

The objectives of the implementation were to design a system that allowed project managers to manage projects effectively following the PRINCE2 methodology and allowed resources to be planned both generically and specifically in advance. There was a requirement for individual resources to be able to see the tasks that they had allocated, mark progress against them, then be able to subsequently complete and submit timesheets according to the work that they had completed.

The Project had three key deliverables:

- Planning processes and work instructions
- A configured 2007 EPM solution
- Trained user base

This would require process and system components addressing the following areas;

- A single project repository
- The implementation of a standard approach to project and work package planning
- A standard approach to resource and capacity planning
- A standard approach to time and progress recording

The implementation schedule began in October 2007 with an initial requirements meeting. After several intensive discovery and envisioning sessions, both a Prototype version and the high level processes were complete by the end of the month. As Christmas fast approached, the work instructions and configuration reached completion.

A tailored training package was put together by CPS, orientated towards WCC's work instructions. The course was designed to teach staff members how to competently manage plans within an EPM environment. The delegates learnt how to use the collaborative functions of MS Project including building teams from the Enterprise resource pool, updating plans from timesheets and making full use of management reporting capabilities.

Dunlavy comments that

'the implementation by CPS was extremely swift with excellent training given and a working system available within a couple of months of initial conception and design.'

Despite the smooth implementation, as with many projects, certain issues arose that added an element of realism to the plan. At WCC, the ICTS Programme Team were originally creating separate work package plans and inserting them into project plans. This meant that team leaders could manage their own work package plans and allocate their own resources accordingly. However, this caused a few complications. Team leaders are not project managers and were not comfortable with the complexity of managing project resources through an enterprise management project tool.



'This initial approach tended to cause issues. Although it was quickly and effortlessly resolved. The simple solution was to have single project plans for all projects which are managed by the PM.'

explained Dunlavy.

CPS Managing and Principle consultant Derek Strachan, who carried out the implementation adds that:

'From my perspective the best part of the implementation was the 'Can do' attitude displayed throughout by the WCC team. The only sticking point worth mentioning was the lack of CPS involvement in the business change process. This could not be helped due to budget constraints, but it did mean that rollout was a little more tricky than necessary.'



The challenge of cultural change is now well underway within the Council. The EPM solution was rolled out within ICTS based within the Civic Centre only. In the future, the aim is to expand usage to the whole of the Civic Centre. Initially there were 90 users of the new EPM system (6 project managers, 19 team leaders and 65 team members), however, it is envisaged that, in the longer term, the system will become corporate and in the region of 2,000 people will be using it.

Now that the system has been in place for a few months the WCC team have much more visibility of where their resources are expending their effort and can therefore plan with much more accuracy. The working environment is changing steadily to one where the workload is much more manageable and the department is more aware of potential resource issues in advance so that they can tackle them accordingly.



Corporate Project Solutions
Regal House, 4 Station Road
Marlow, Bucks SL7 1NZ

t 01628 895600

f 01628 895601

e solutions@cps.co.uk

cps.co.uk