THE ROYAL NAVY PREPARES FOR A DIGITAL FUTURE WITH BUSINESS SOLUTIONS THAT SAVE COSTS AND IMPROVES PERFORMANCE

The Royal Navy is the UK's naval warfare force, maintaining a fleet of technologically sophisticated ships, submarines, and aircraft. It operates from three onshore locations in Britain, where commissioned ships and submarines are based, and from two naval air stations. The Royal Navy employs around 30,000 active personnel, 4,000 maritime reserve and 8,000 royal fleet reserve.

The Challenge

Improve effectiveness of business solutions with consistent and easy-to-use automated applications; reduce reliance on manual and inefficient processes and costly third-party technologies; leverage investment in central Microsoft Enterprise Agreement to mitigate budget constraints; support long-term digital transformation strategy.

Location

London and Portsmouth, United Kingdom

Industry

Armed Defence Services

Products & Services

Microsoft Power Platform, Microsoft Power BI, CPS Modern Work Management

Digital Backbone

Like many armed forces worldwide, the Royal Navy recognises the vital role of digital solutions for its future success. In 2020, it designed an ambitious plan to become fully digital by 2025, with budget management at its core.

The plan aimed to achieve digital transformation across the organisation, using cost-effective, widely used technologies to replace many bespoke systems and manual processes. The Ministry of Defence' (MOD) central licensing agreement, with Microsoft (which the Royal Navy falls within) offers a key opportunity to deliver these aims, offering a range of proven business tools and platforms for easy deployment while leveraging investment in licensing.

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> We wanted to create a Microsoft 'digital backbone', harnessing industry standard technologies to automate, streamline and digitise our processes. We have a diverse set of applications, technologies and vendors, built up over time, and we sought to consolidate and rationalise these to minimise manual interventions. Our idea was to replace the development of costly bespoke solutions by using a platform that provides low-code, low-cost, easily adaptable products with on-demand reporting.
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> **Lt Pete Reeves**
> Low Code Product Manager at Data and Navy Applications
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Proactive Approach

After reviewing Microsoft's range of solutions, Data and Navy Applications identified Power Apps as the suitable platform for building digital applications quickly in a cost-effective manner. Microsoft Power BI was also selected to deliver intelligent data analysis and on-demand reporting, with coherent and interactive insights to support more informed decision-making.

Finding support to help deliver the digital application objectives was the next challenge. Data and Navy Applications needed a partner who understood the Royal Navy's technology and operational environment and the Microsoft technology stack. They also needed help to build a new proactive operating model that would quickly identify and support digital opportunities for process improvements from anywhere in the organisation.

Microsoft recognises CPS as a leading Business Applications Solution Partner and a key technology delivery partner within the Defence industry. Having worked with the Royal Navy and many other TLB's within the MOD on several discrete projects, CPS has a reputation as an innovative partner and was keen to support the Data and Navy Application team.

Flexible and Agile

To support the new structure and help drive the operating model, CPS provided a dedicated Power Platform, low-code software development consultants and project managers to work as part of a combined application development team. Collaboration was inherent in the new operating model, and the joint team worked closely with multiple end-users and departments to assess their application requirements and evaluate technical and commercial feasibility of potential solutions.

As requirements for new applications emerged from the Royal Navy's different departments, CPS helped support the initial discovery and business case approval process. Once requirements were approved, the CPS delivery team provided on-demand technical capabilities and resources to develop, test, implement and project manage the new low-code application.

> The demand for this new digital functionality grew quickly, so CPS had to be flexible to support our new agile ways of working. CPS' flexibility was crucial to the responsiveness of the team within the new operating model, at one point, providing up to 15 people working with us in app development sprints. That ability to provide a resource for our fast-changing environment, delivering the right technical expertise at the right time without long-term commitment or inflated costs, was critical to success.

Lt Pete Reeves
Low Code Product Manager at Data and Navy Applications

Performance Improvements

A central objective for the new operating model was to consolidate diverse application development. Before Power Apps were deployed, separate departments chose the technologies they believed were suitable for their solution requirements. To encourage internal departments that Power Apps would help them meet their needs, a significant milestone was to create a 'Front Door' application. This tracked, documented, and managed every aspect of requirements and helped user departments to make technology decisions based on clear evidence.

Deploying Microsoft Dataverse as a central data backbone was another significant advancement. Past issues caused by a lack of historical data were removed, and application performance was improved considerably. Dataverse also enabled CPS to modernise and update previously inaccessible legacy applications.

With these initial building blocks and key enablers in place, CPS worked with the Royal Navy to create some 22 applications of various sizes, complexities, and scales. Amongst the most innovative applications were:

- Facilities management solution enables building defects to be reported more effectively across Royal Navy sites, replacing an oral or email-based process. Users can now quickly identify and report defects, with building managers being able to easily track their status and resolve them.

- The Questionnaire system provides consistent responses to information governance questions, with simple and consistent reporting, and easy assessment of assigned values for each question. The app can be easily tailored for any questionnaire.

- KPI and Benefits Tracker uses the strength of Power BI to search data from different data sources and quickly present them in integrated and consolidated reports for each KPI

- Visitor access simplifies and coheres the process of assessing visitors to Royal Navy controlled facilities, with information shared quickly and easily to all concerned parties.

- Expense Management application allows the Royal Navy to easily create, manage & track expenses which feed into their existing expense systems, automating all backend processes and providing a strategic view of expenditure.
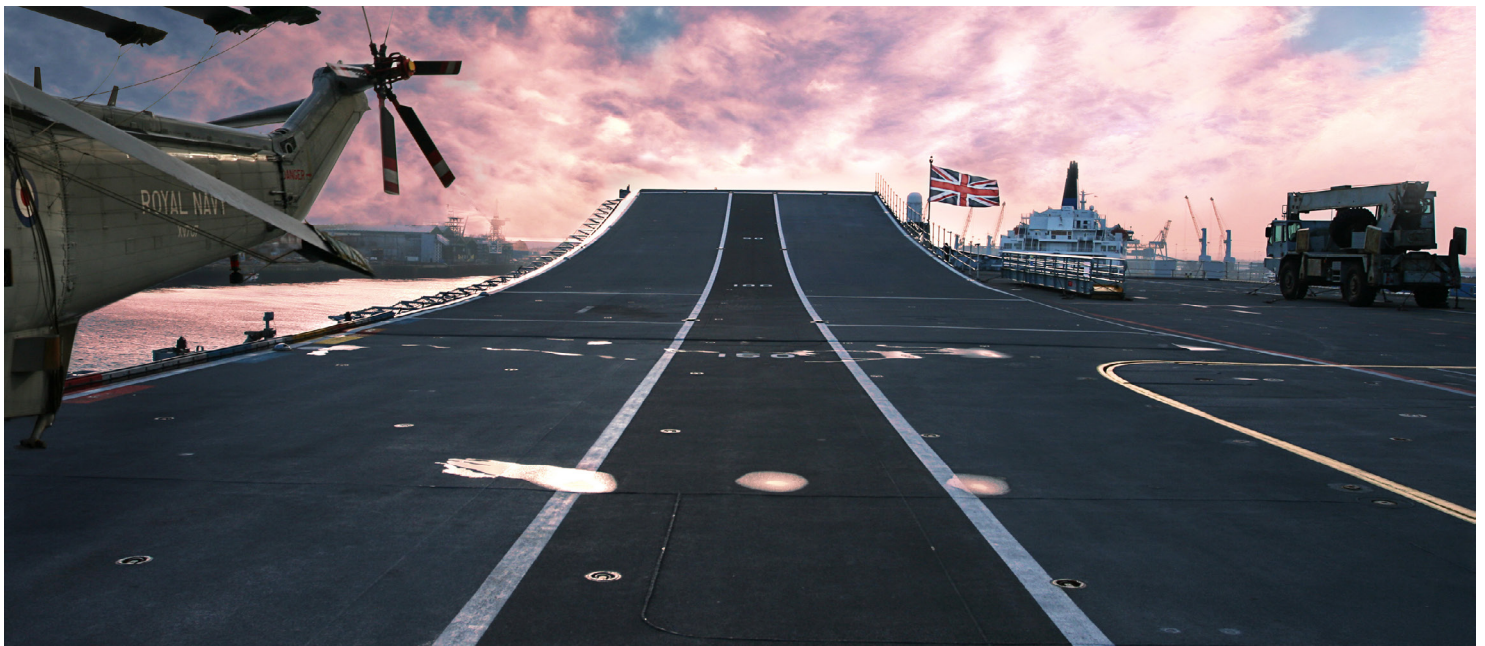
I Business Benefits

- Improved application performance from a proven development platform

- Consolidation of diverse bespoke solutions and manual interventions

- A major step towards the Royal Navy's cost-effective digital transformation plan for 2025

- Leveraged investment in the central licensing agreement

- Improving employee experiences through digitised processes

- Reducing the total cost of ownership of legacy IT solutions and third party spend

- Hyper-flexible resourcing team whereby capacity can be scaled up or down on demand

- Created a central Data-Backbone supporting all new digital requirements for the foreseeable future.

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> CPS has helped us meet a huge digital and organisational challenge. The team has developed some 22 apps that demonstrate how traditional business processes can be improved, cost-effectively, using an accessible and consistent low code development platform. CPS have supported us to move to a refined and demanding operating model providing the flexible resourcing needed to handle the digital demands of the modern Royal Navy.
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Lt Pete Reeves
Low Code Product Manager at Data and Navy Applications

The Results

Some 22 applications deliver improved performance compared with past solutions. Bespoke solutions are being consolidated, and manual interventions minimised. A development backbone is in place in readiness for digital transformation.

For More Information

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