Asta Powerproject Case Study: CACI Ltd

ASTA POWERPROJECT SUITE HELPS CACI CONTROL RESOURCES AND MEET BUSINESS GOALS

▶ **ASTA POWERPROJECT HELPS DRIVE PROJECT CONSISTENCY AND QUALITY**

Up until three years ago, CACI had been running a complex spreadsheet-orientated process in MS Project for managing the delivery of customer contracts and for consultant fee-earning calculations. Coupled with summary analysis reporting and the transferral of completed progress data for each project, CACI identified a need to move away from this labour-intensive process. At the same time it wanted to improve its forecasting ability across its wide range of customer projects. Such a business-critical process merited the implementation of a more efficient, joined-up and cost-effective model, allowing the company to manage more effectively a large and diverse portfolio of projects.

After reviewing other systems, the Asta Powerproject suite was chosen as the preferred software. Simon Kelly, Operations Director, Business Intelligence within the IT Solutions division, was able to identify a system with the capabilities the business needed, and with the potential to bring cost efficiencies greater than the initial outlay simply by better managing workflow, automating reports and controlling all information centrally.
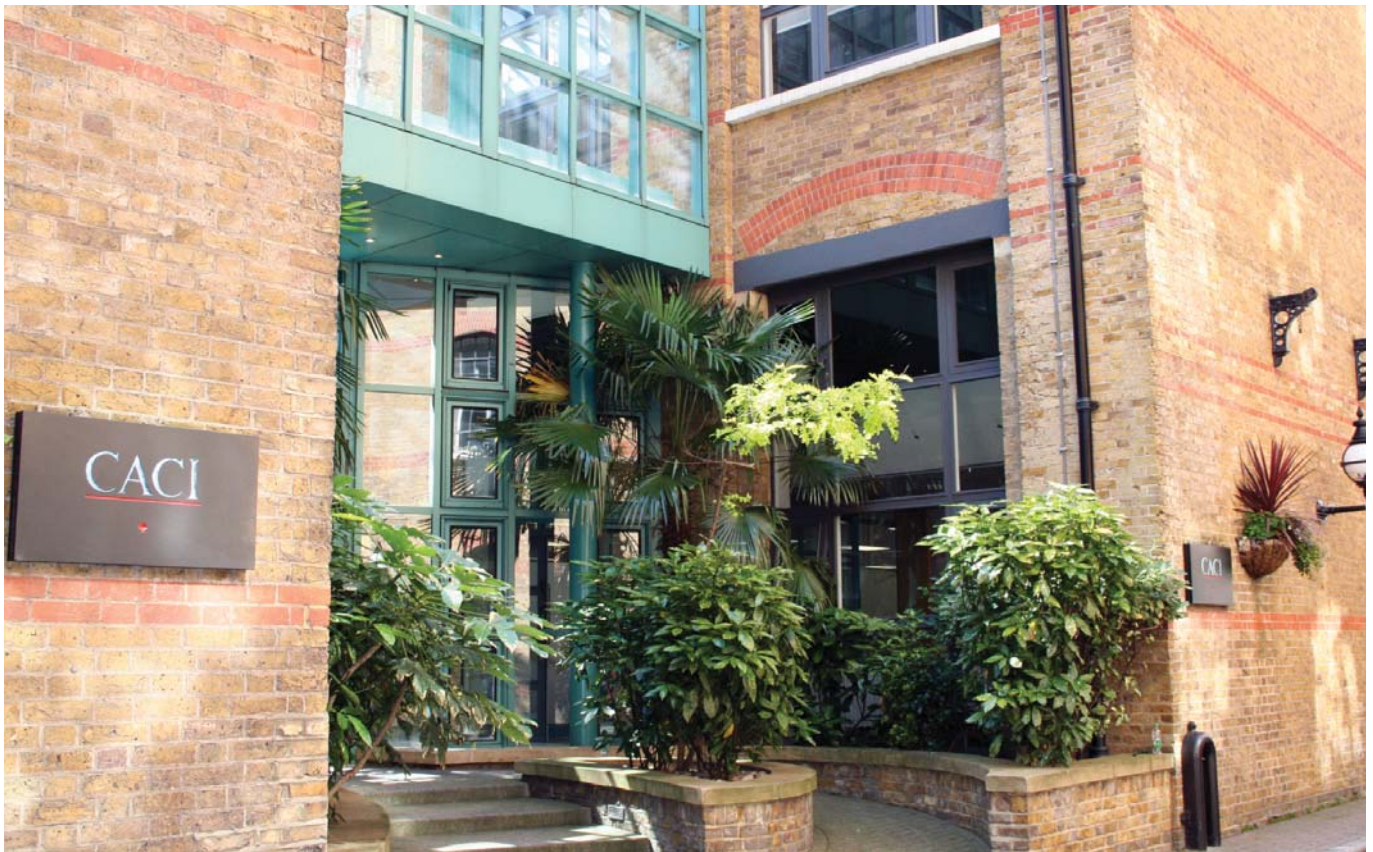
> **" Having all time sheet data inside the system gives us an up-to-date picture of exactly where we are against the plan. "**

CACI Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of CACI International Inc. operating out of the UK and Netherlands. It provides an unrivalled range of marketing solutions and information systems to local and central government and to most industries within the private sector. CACI takes pride in its ability to develop innovative yet practical IT solutions which provide real benefit to clients; it achieves this through a powerful combination of data, software and the expertise of its people. CACI's services, systems and support span four main divisions covering IT Solutions, Location Planning, Integrated Marketing and Digital Solutions, each area reaching a wide range of industry sectors and all of which aimed at helping clients to streamline and improve business and realise operational efficiencies.

CACI's position as the leading IT systems and marketing solutions provider is built on a reputation for keeping customer needs at the forefront of business objectives and in support of this CACI places high importance on delivering to its customers at the highest possible levels. To help sustain its quality and timeliness of delivery, CACI has implemented a project portfolio management system from Asta Development, which it uses across all four of its divisions to maintain consistency.

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Simon explains about his division and how Asta Powerproject is used to enhance working practices. "We provide software applications, systems integration and ICT consultancy and delivery services for some of the largest public and private sector organisations across the UK, Ireland and Europe: from telecoms – offering Operational Support Systems solutions, strategic consultancy and network architecture and design services, to children's services – offering software that gives a holistic view of a child across all touch points, like Social Services. We also provide services to the NHS -- business intelligence, performance management, financial cost solutions, and we have a history of running large services projects like the Scottish census and high-end web applications to central government departments."

"We therefore have a large portfolio of different-sized projects, in fact we can be working on 120 live projects at one time. Before we started using Asta Powerproject it was difficult to manage all these projects in a cohesive way. We used to employ a project accounting system originally part of finance, which was fed with a high number of spreadsheets. The system was labour-intensive and prone to human error. Project governance and consistency across all deliverables is important to us because this

drives quality, but we had all functions of planning, governance, accounting, management and forecasting split across different spreadsheets and different plans. We introduced Asta Powerproject to consolidate these and to bring to the business the right mix of functionality to fit our goals."

▶ THE RIGHT FUNCTIONALITY BRINGS TIME AND RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

CACI's IT Solutions division sells not only bespoke services but turnkey product solutions, one example is its NHS Data Warehouse offering. InView is a modular management information system that allows every level of decision maker to view, analyse and report on all areas of clinical, financial and operational performance. Unsurprisingly these are popular solutions and CACI has enjoyed many successful implementations. Such projects are an ideal candidate for Asta's template creation functionality. "We find it really useful that in Asta we can set up a template for projects with a similar structure. For each new project we can create a project plan and work-breakdown structure by using a simple drag-and-drop process – it is easy and saves a lot of project manager time. We can now initiate a project much more quickly and efficiently than we could with MS Project," explains Simon.

▶ ALL DOCUMENTATION IS EASILY ACCESSIBLE

Once a contract is set up, project managers can allocate appropriate resource. They also store all supporting documentation in the system so that everything they need for a project is easily accessible in one place. Explains Simon: "All supporting documentation goes into Asta Powerproject, from contractual documents to Project Initiation Documents, risk registers and change control documentation. Asta allows us to start from the beginning and build up accurate perspectives of a project - this gives us an overall living plan that we can communicate to our customers and use to control the project's execution."

▶ FORECASTING MADE EASIER WITH INTEGRATED TIME SHEETS

Once all resources have been allocated in the plan, the weekly cycle is undertaken following the review of time sheets. Time sheets were controlled separately before the implementation of the Time Sheet for Asta Powerproject component, so all actuals on a project had to be fed into the plan manually, which was very time-consuming and prone to errors. "The Time Sheet process runs so much better now, like an oiled machine," says Simon. "It used to be a monthly process based on spreadsheets, now that process is knitted together with the project plans. Our time sheets used to be captured at project level – it wasn't clear exactly what a piece of time was booked for, making it hard to see exactly where a consultant's time was being deployed. It was up to the project manager to try to apportion that over the work breakdown structure. This was a laborious process. Now, using Asta's integrated time sheets, it is not only accurate but happens automatically, giving us a big reduction in project manager effort."

A simpler forecasting process brings other benefits too. "Having all time sheet data inside the system gives us an up-to-date picture of exactly where we are against the plan.

We have the latest figures and these are used to help us predict where we will be at the end of the month or quarter. This data is used to show us our financial position and the status of where we are against the project milestones. We have a much clearer picture than before and consequently, our process for forecasting has improved dramatically at a business level. Not only is the data more accurate, we can carry out our forecasting more frequently giving us the ability to make fast decisions about problems instead of discovering them at month-end. The software has therefore given us better governance and project health tracking."

ACCURACY OF DATA HELPS WITH COMPLIANCE

The company is governed by US accounting laws; the finance department lays out a rigid set of rules on how project revenues are recognised against progress. Fulfilling this requirement accurately has been made much easier since Asta Powerproject was implemented. Explains Simon, "It is very important for us to have an accurate

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reflection of project status at any given time so that we can calculate the business position – no-one wants to have to make unwelcome adjustments to the accounts. In terms of accuracy of numbers, the software has given us a much sharper picture. It enables us to comply with our accounting regulations more accurately because we have consistency. Our accounting process at the end of each month is also made much easier because everything reconciles and we minimise nasty surprises generated by human error inherent in a more fragmented process. Now, it just all adds up."

PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT BENEFITS FROM MULTI-USER ACCESS

Managing such a large number of projects requires a consistent approach and full visibility. It is Asta's capability to manage a complete portfolio, rather than a single project at a time, that has brought the greatest benefit to Simon's business. "Key for us is to efficiently manage the whole portfolio in an integrated fashion," he explains. "We can now plan, not only at resource allocation level, but also at the work breakdown structure level, which subsequently rolls up into the overall portfolio. It is the linkage between detailed project plans, project accounts, documentation and timesheets that is most beneficial, something we could not achieve with MS Project. We now have a much more holistic approach, which drives up quality for our customers."

Within the Business Intelligence division, project managers, consultants, administrators, managers, and accountants all have access to the system to meet their

respective needs – and everyone sees the same picture. Having multi-user access means different people can work on the same project at the same time. "Before we had multi-user access," says Simon, "consultants, for example, could book timings without the team leader being aware. Now this cannot happen; the time sheet tool they are using pre-fills the activities they plan to do, no matter where they are, as everyone has remote access. This means the team leader or project manager is fully up to date at all times and there are no surprises. The system allows us to enforce the process."

▶ REALISING RETURN ON INVESTMENT

CACI Ltd is an ISO9001 accredited company, and Asta Powerproject is one of the tools that helps fulfil the requirements for that accreditation. Simon explains: "We take our accreditation commitments very seriously. When the auditors are in they can clearly see we have a consistent approach with a checking process in place. The auditing process goes smoothly every time. All our processes and documentation is clear and visible, and we don't have to do any preparation in advance. So, not only does the software help improve quality for our customer, it keeps us compliant with our certification in terms of consistency and best practice."

"From a ROI point of view we have certainly seen rewards. Looking back at where we were then compared with where we are now: we have a lot less manual intervention; the processes for weekly and monthly project accounting are much slicker and free from error; we have less surprises when we review because projects are now managed on an incremental basis; and all documents related to projects (contracts, POs, change requests, etc) are all linked in the system. We now have one accurate version of the truth."

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▶ ABOUT ASTA DEVELOPMENT

Asta Development is a leading international developer of project, portfolio and resource management software which provides solutions for managing any size and any type of project.

Since its launch in 1988, the company's core solution suite, **Asta Powerproject,** has evolved and improved driven by regular feedback from users and using the latest technologies available. It has proved its capabilities over the years on high profile projects throughout the world and is now used by thousands of planners in a wide variety of industry sectors in the UK, Europe, Asia Pacific and the USA. Asta Development supports customers directly from its offices in Oxfordshire and Shropshire. Outside of the UK, Asta Development has a network of distributors who supply, train and support customers, with the software available in up to seven different languages. Asta Development is a part of Eleco plc, a holding company focusing on software and advanced off-site building systems for the construction industry. The company is listed on the London Stock Exchange's Alternative Investment Market (AIM). More information about Asta Development and its products can be found at www.astadev.com and information about Eleco plc can be found at www.eleco.com.

▶ ABOUT CACI LTD

CACI was founded in 1975 in the UK and operates from several offices across the country. Headquartered in London, CACI Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of CACI International Inc.

It offers an unrivalled range of marketing solutions and information systems to local and central government and to businesses from most industry sectors. Its people are the best in their fields and are able to draw on the knowledge and experience of their colleagues to grow professionally.

CACI's emphasis on people creates an entrepreneurial spirit where it can be flexible, resourceful and individual in its approach. This enables it to provide its customers with the best products and services available in the industry.

To find out more about CACI visit: www.caci.co.uk

www.astadev.com

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