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6 YEARS ON AND ASTA TEAMPLAN IS CRUCIAL TO CANON'S LOCALISATION PROJECTS

▶ Asta Teamplan is crucial to Canon's localisation projects

Canon Technology Europe (CTE), based in Berkshire, England, turns the documentation and software that support Canon's new product releases into localised versions for the European market. CTE translates the software, manuals and websites into as many as 30 European languages and supports the whole range of Canon products. At any one time a project manager might be juggling between five and ten projects, each dealing with different branches of the business and each requiring translation into numerous languages, involving word, cultural reference, icon, diagram, screen and on-device translation. Any project can use a different permutation of internal and external resource, which can involve teams of translators, translation agencies, engineers, testers, editors and proofreaders, all meeting strict and critical deadlines.

CTE's project and programme managers use Asta Teamplan as their project and resource management tool to run and deliver these complex projects to budget and to schedule. Localisation Project Manager, Rebecca Mitton, explains why, over the past six and a half years, Asta Teamplan has become crucial to their operation.
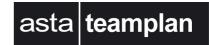
▶ Shaping and organising internal processes

"We have been using Asta Teamplan for such a long time now, it's hard to imagine a time when we ran a project without it; it has completely shaped our processes," says Rebecca. "All projects follow the same process which allows us to plan and forecast, schedule and monitor every project across the organisation in the same way: continuity and consistency are vital in our line of work."

"Something we find particularly useful is the way our Teamplan is set up: it mimics the naming convention and structure of our network, which is in customer groups, so it's very recognisable to everyone. We have developed a view that lets us see all projects as summary timeline tasks and individual project schedules -- a slice of the data that we use extensively. We use Timesheets to log time against assigned resources, which ultimately helps us to collate hours, monitor project costs based on actual spending versus budget, monitor utilisation stats and view all resource allocation." It is imperative for CTE to track all time, resource and costs scrupulously: time really is money, so resources need to be busy at all times.

Asta Teamplan has been invaluable to the business, not only for day-to-day planning but when faced with unforeseen external forces that could have shattered the structure of a project. Every now and again Rebecca is reminded of why they rely on it so much.

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"Last year we had a series of very large, challenging projects, all of which overlapped and impacted each other. Every morning I would receive new information which changed the whole schedule of any given project in the set; this affected all the other projects and the resource planning attached to them. Using Asta Teamplan I was able to pull up all schedules, see the overlap and get the overall picture, then I could plan in detail and realign all aspects of the projects. I was able to update the schedules, re-plan resources and, importantly, quickly communicate this to all stakeholders. I am certain we could not have reacted so efficiently without it."

Not only has Asta Teamplan solidified the company's processes and been a rescue tool in times of crisis, it has proven to be a useful communication tool between the department and the rest of the organisation. "All resources, schedules, planned projects and financial information can be pulled off the system. We can see at a glance what we planned against actual figures, what projects are coming up and which resource to allocate. We can run a planned and pro-active process of management and have the time to deal with anything that goes wrong, rather than wasting time fire-fighting."

"We hold an annual support contract and the support from the Asta team is excellent."

The importance of Asta Teamplan is embedded in the business culture of CTE, which makes sure that all new recruits are introduced to Asta Teamplan and up to speed right from the start. "It can be a struggle to establish the importance of Project Management software skills in the mindset of some companies," says Rebecca, "We make it part of our induction process: new project managers have a few one-to-one sessions with me, followed by a one-hour timesheet session. It doesn't take long to get people up and running with Asta Teamplan and consequently our best practices."

Rebecca is able to provide daily IT support using her own knowledge, which stems from the extensive initial training given by Asta Development as part of the original contract and from her experience of using Asta Teamplan over the years. For anything else she calls on the Asta Development support team. "We hold an annual support contract and the support from the Asta team is excellent; we have also had some additional training with the developers and we attend the User Forum each year to keep ourselves up to date."

With a tough year ahead for all organisations, Rebecca sees the role of Project Management software becoming even more crucial. "For advance planning, recording timesheet data and summarising detailed schedules, forecasts and overviews, I believe we could not manage without Asta Teamplan.

The implementation phase took a little time, but was worth it, as we have a set up that works perfectly – even six and a half years on ..."