Asta Powerproject Case Study: Denbighshire County Council

DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S ICT CAN PROVIDE MORE FOR LESS WITH THE ASTA POWERPROJECT SUITE

▶ BACKGROUND

Denbighshire County Council ICT department started to use the Asta Powerproject suite a few years ago following the announcement of a number of budget cuts that would necessitate a reduction in people resources. A busy department managing about 60 live projects at a time (and a pipeline that was always full), the ICT department soon recognised that a more professional approach to resource planning and management would be essential to face the challenge of providing "more for less." Like many other organisations it was using basic, disparate project management systems and spreadsheets that were not interconnected and could not provide a whole view of all projects, the true workload and the ability to future plan. The department implemented the Asta Powerproject suite to help maximise the available resource that was stretched across a growing number of projects.

▶ TRANSFORMATION OF SERVICES IS KEY TO COST EFFICIENCIES

Robert Douglass is Systems Project Manager for the Business Solutions department within ICT. He helps co-ordinate the transformation of service delivery throughout the Authority and maintaining best practice implementation throughout the department.

"The role of Business Solutions is important to the Authority," said Robert. "Computer systems can make services more efficient, and efficiency can make resource and cost savings. The Asta Powerproject suite helps us manage transformation-based projects."

One example where Asta Powerproject was used to deliver a project that transformed the service and significantly

reduced the resource required was the setting up of a Proforma invoice system. The function had been paper-based for many years and had become very time-consuming. The Proforma invoices would be sent to a department whose responsibility it was to type up the invoices and process them.

"Business Solutions developed a web-based system to automate the invoicing process, which freed up resource to be deployed more effectively elsewhere," explained Robert. "This project was quite complex and Asta Powerproject helped us to manage each stage of development, from design to delivery. It is particularly good at managing highly structured projects."

▶ THE ASTA POWERPROJECT SUITE HELPS RESOLVE CONFLICTS OF RESOURCE AND IMPROVES CUSTOMER RELATIONS

Business Solutions delivers software solutions to the full spectrum of Authority services, like Highways, HR, Housing, to name a few. Projects range from small applications or integration solutions that deliver interfaces between internal

> ❝❝ **What the Asta Powerproject suite gives us is full visibility of resources and tasks across multiple projects.** ❞❞

systems, to corporate projects that affect the whole Authority. Asta Powerproject helps coordinate all project plans in one place, and feeds current, future and potential projects into one manageable pipeline. Most importantly it addresses the department's ongoing main issue: conflict resolution.

"Our main issue really always was, and still is, conflict of resources," said Robert. "For example, you need someone to do a particular task on a project, like testing, but that person with those skills is busy doing another job testing something else, usually the result of an overrun on another project. What the Asta Powerproject suite gives us is full visibility of resources and tasks across multiple projects. More basic, less sophisticated software is really no more than a spreadsheet. With Asta Powerproject we can see what each resource has coming up, what they are working on now and next and highlight conflicts, so we can give an accurate time of when that testing can be carried out; this just doesn't happen with something like MS Project."

Asta Powerproject lets Business Solutions see exactly when a project can start. When all time sheets are submitted, they are approved and applied to the schedule. "We can see where contingency is being eaten away and the effects on on-time delivery," explained Robert. "Then someone is able to study all resources and decide who is allocated to what. Conflicts are highlighted and because we are aware of what's coming up, we can give a realistic picture to the customer. MS Project told us very little, and we had to rely on one project manager telling another about resource overlap, this made project management very difficult. Moreover, it was impossible to give advance warning to a project sponsor or lead that there may be a slippage in schedule. Asta Powerproject gives us that

asta ElecoSoft

knowledge, allowing us to forward plan and pass that information on to our customer's weeks or even months in advance instead of days, this makes them far more accepting of a possible delay and so Asta Powerproject suite helps us improve customer relations."

Business Solutions likes the simplicity of Asta Powerproject's histograms that show instantly how resource is allocated over a long period of time. A 100% allocation symbol shows very visibly that time is exactly allocated; Robert knows that when he sees a 300% allocation he has a problem. "It's like an early warning system," he said, "Asta Powerproject suite is then used to level resource and where possible no-one's allocation is above 100%. Basic software systems don't let you have full visibility across multiple projects."

Asta Powerproject also helps plan for when the right resource will become available.

"Requests for change are always deemed a priority because we are supporting an application," said Robert. "If we get a lot of change requests at one time, we cannot fulfil them all straightaway; not everyone has the right skill set. But with everything we need to know in one view what we can do is see when the right skills will be freed up, so Asta Powerproject helps with forward planning -- we couldn't do this without it."

▶ TIME SHEET IS AN INTEGRAL AND TIME-SAVING FEATURE

"The beauty of Asta Powerproject suite's Time Sheet is that it feeds directly into Asta Powerproject, eliminating inputting time for project managers," said Robert. "Should an extension of time be requested, the Time Sheet allows the person carrying out the task to make the amendment themselves, which can also be beneficial to project managers should they wish to run their projects that way. It is a feature they can choose to simply switch on or off."

> **" Once installed you only have the ongoing costs for the service, and these are cost-efficient. The support provided by Asta is second to none - I've never come across support that works like it - it's exceptional. "**

▶ ASTA POWERPROJECT SUITE'S DASHBOARD REPORTING TOOL ENGAGES ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Using Asta Powerproject suite Business Solutions has created a set of reports adapted to suit particular needs. The department chooses which one of those reports to take into a particular meeting. It has found that having the flexibility to tailor reports to various levels of detail is highly beneficial to their relationship with senior management and other stakeholders.

"Often, stakeholders are only interested in the grand totals – we can put a date range into the report to show them just what they want to see for that period of time. It might be how much of our time was spent on projects versus how much of our time was spent on support. This was a task that was particularly time-consuming before we used Asta Powerproject suite and specifically the Business Intelligence exporter -- now we can run a report quickly and easily whenever we want."

"It is more beneficial when it comes to senior management reports, because they often need to know so much more. Before dashboard reporting we would have given them a printed list of all projects and their stages, they had no visibility of anything else other than what the project manager told them. Now they have a dashboard that

gives them not only the high level view of everything that they need to know, but the option to drill down and see the information at a more granular level. They can see each project in terms of progress, size, the percentage complete, the number of projects in the pipeline and what's due over what we are working on, or they can see in more detail the number of projects assigned to each project manager and even the costs associated with each project down to service level. This information is as valuable to us as it is to them – for example, we can use it to show senior management that we need extra resource to complete on time. It also shows them the knock-on effect that this will have on other projects if we don't. Most importantly the dashboard tool helps senior management understand what we are up against; therefore, they are more engaged with what we are doing and our requirements."

▶ ASTA POWERPROJECT SUITE DELIVERS FURTHER COST BENEFITS

When Business Solutions decided to implement the Asta Powerproject suite, it had in mind a tool that would grow to be used Authority-wide, enabling all departments to speak to one another and bring ongoing benefits.

"We would find it difficult to manage projects without Asta Powerproject, it would take a lot more of our time and resource on task management. If we can see the benefits of it then there is no reason why the other departments could not benefit from the savings it brings too. Making Asta Powerproject an Authority-wide tool is still the aim, enabling all services to interconnect and providing full visibility to the entire Authority." said Robert. "Once installed you only have the ongoing costs for the service, and these are cost-efficient. The support provided by Asta is second to none – I've never come across support that works like it – it's exceptional."

asta
ElecoSoft

▶ 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 product, **Asta Powerproject**, has evolved and improved driven by regular feedback from users and using the latest technologies available.

Having proved its capabilities over the years on high profile projects throughout the world such as Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam: Jumeirah Park, Dubai; The London Eye and The Shard in London, The Space Shuttle, New Orleans: Ipswich Motorway, Brisbane and The Reichstag, Berlin, **Asta Powerproject** is now used by thousands of planners in a wide variety of industry sectors in the UK, Europe, Asia Pacific and the USA. Companies large and small are using **Asta Powerproject**, as well as a growing range of new software products from Asta, to successfully plan and manage projects of all sizes.

In the UK, Asta Development supports customers directly from its offices in Oxfordshire and Shropshire with a comprehensive range of services including consultancy, training and technical support. Outside the UK, it has a network of partners and distributors who supply, train and support customers in 20 countries and in seven different languages.

Asta Development is a part of Eleco plc, a holding company focused on software development and services for architectural, engineering and construction industries.

> **❝❝ With the Asta Powerproject suite we can see what each resource has coming up, what they are working on now and next and highlight conflicts, so we can give an accurate time of when that testing can be carried out; this just does not happen with something like MS Project. ❞❞**

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 DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

The Council is the largest public sector organisation in the county, employing 5,000 people and serving a population of over 93,000. The county stretches from the coastal resorts of Rhyl and Prestatyn, through the scenic Vale of Clwyd with its historic towns and villages and through to communities in the Dee Valley. Tourism and hospitality are the main industries in the county.

The Council's administrative base is in Ruthin, although many departments are located across the county. Politically there is no overall control and the Council has a Cabinet structure with its membership reflecting the political make-up of the organisation. The Council's priorities are around modernising education, responding to demographic change, roads and flood defences and regeneration.

Its services are wide ranging, from the statutory social services and education to planning, regeneration, museums, leisure, community safety, countryside and council tax, amongst others. A major focus for the Council is to get closer to communities through more communication, consultation and engagement.

For more information visit http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/

CYNGOR
Sir Ddinbych
Denbighshire
COUNTY COUNCIL

asta
ElecoSoft