

LIGHTBOX EDUCATION HAS GREATER VISIBILITY AND ACCESS TO PROJECT DATA WITH ASTA TEAMPLAN

► SUMMARY

The Business Context

- ▼ A division of RM plc, Lightbox Education provide innovative and engaging learning materials for the education sector.
- ▼ Managing multiple and diverse projects efficiently is key to Lightbox Education continuing to deliver exceptional products.
- ▼ Resource planning and utilisation needs to be accurate due to the large range of consultancy services offered.

The Challenge

- ▼ Disparate systems, numerous Excel spreadsheets and some 'home-grown' components were time consuming and lacked accuracy.
- ▼ The solution needed to be configurable to meet all users' business objectives.
- ▼ Lightbox Education needed a system that used a central database and provided consistent management information.

The Solution

- ▼ Asta Teamplan was installed to replace the disparate systems meaning any changes made are now reflected throughout the whole system.
- ▼ Tighter processes and controls have been introduced to their project management.
- ▼ The flexibility offered by Asta Teamplan ensures the system can evolve to meet growing business needs.

The Benefits

- ▼ Reduction in the amount of administrative effort required in maintaining production data.
- ▼ Greater visibility and access to project data.
- ▼ Informed business decisions can be made far quicker using accurate data.
- ▼ Improved reporting on revenue forecasting, resource management and utilisation.

Lightbox Education (a division of RM plc and formerly 3T Productions) has been fusing technology and education to create exciting, innovative and engaging learning materials for the education sector for more than 20 years. The product range is broad: from tools that pupils can use to produce their own work to applications that teachers can employ to teach and assess the whole class. Coupled with a plethora of consultancy services, Lightbox is delivering outstanding educational products that help teachers to teach and learners to learn.

► THE CHALLENGE

To manage its many and diverse projects Lightbox had been using a combination of standalone Microsoft Project plans, numerous Excel spreadsheets and some 'home-grown' components, all of which required considerable effort to maintain and were unable to provide the accuracy required in a timely manner.

The challenge for Lightbox was to identify an integrated project management system that would store data in one place and provide consistent management information to help deliver better business decisions. In March 2008, Lightbox chose Asta Teamplan from Asta Development over Microsoft and Hydra.

One of the key turning points in the decision process was a discovery day held at Lightbox's own offices where the Asta Development team demonstrated the system. The hands-on experience was an ideal opportunity not only to see the capabilities of the software but to appreciate the depth of knowledge and experience within Asta.

"From the start of our engagement process Asta was very honest in identifying the pros and cons of its solution and its potential alignment with our business," said David Beswick, Production Manager at Lightbox Education.

► THE SOLUTION

"The implementation went well," said David. "It involved a tried and tested method to ensure a configuration that would meet all our users' business



objectives, a planning workshop, system set-up and installation and training and post-implementation review. We were already used to completing timesheets so that helped the changeover. It took some of our project managers a little time to get used to working with an enterprise system; more discipline is required in maintaining plans than with a standalone planning tool, but it's worth it to achieve the full benefits in resource management and forecasting."

A few months after the live launch, the company underwent a major reorganisation. 3T merged with two other subsidiaries of RM plc to form Lightbox Education plc. The new organisation had four locations instead of two, one in India, and twice as many timesheet users. The flexibility of Asta Teamplan was about to be tested.

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► THE BENEFITS

“As well as bespoke project work, we now undertake more product maintenance and enhancement, necessitating changes to our processes,” explained David.

“However, the flexibility of Asta Teamplan has enabled us to implement our changes fairly smoothly. One of the benefits of Asta Teamplan is that you can use it in a very straightforward way. It doesn’t complicate simple processes and if you wish to add features and extend the system you can.”

Lightbox is now enjoying the new functionality. “We like the intuitive functionality, especially in relation to scheduling, and the fact that you can easily view and access data in the form of a ‘tree structure.’ This makes it easy to examine information at various levels and drill down or roll up to see more or less detail as necessary,” said David.

“Asta Teamplan has brought together the disparate systems that we had been using. Now, when we make a change, it is reflected throughout the whole system, without the need to make the same change in several places and we have been able to reduce the administrative effort in maintaining our production data.”

One of the most noticeable benefits that Asta Teamplan has brought is the speed with which the company can make informed decisions.

“This is certainly the case with resourcing,” said David. “It gives us more confidence with resource-related decisions and this was one of the key reasons we chose the software initially. Going forward, we see the system providing many benefits to the management of our projects and to the business as a whole. In particular, we believe the system will contribute to improve reporting, especially relating to revenue forecasting, resource management and utilisation.”



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