

Asta Powerproject Case Study: Pera Technology

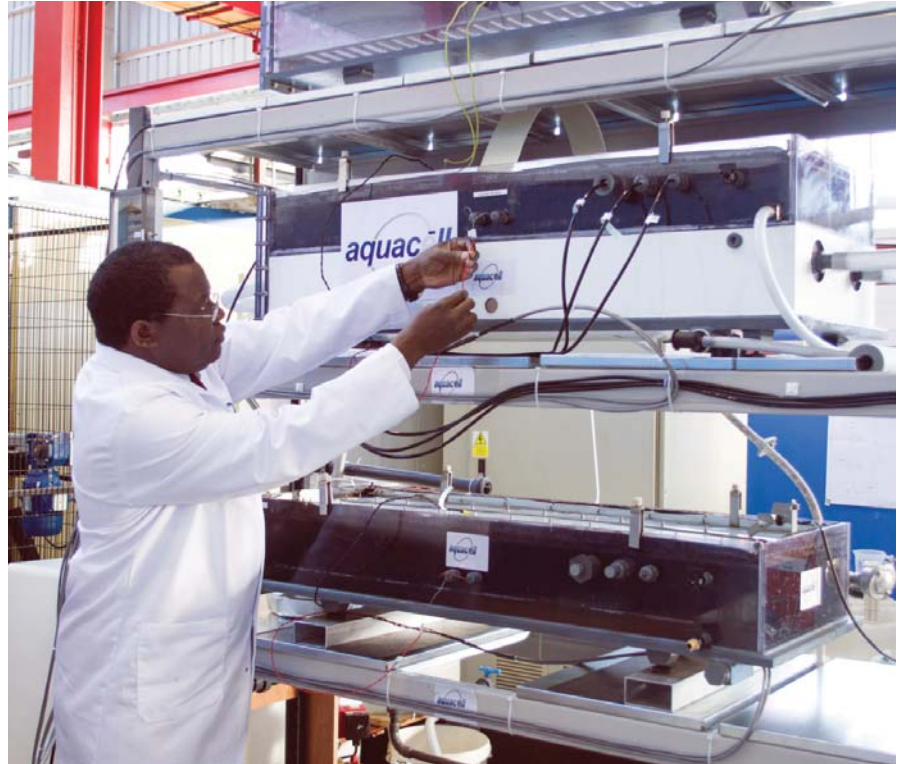
PERA TECHNOLOGY – DE-RISKING THE NPD PROCESS WITH ASTA POWERPROJECT

► WHY PERA TECHNOLOGY CHOSE ASTA POWERPROJECT

If a company is not absolutely certain that its ideas will work in the marketplace, new product development (NPD) can become high risk. Pera Technology brings the knowledge to explore opportunities, the commercial relationships to take the product to market, has access to relevant technology expertise to effectively create the new products and has many years of experience that allow it to foresee and dodge the pitfalls. New product development is a rigorous and intensive process: Pera Technology needed a trusted resource to help it align all of its processes and communications in one place – it chose Asta Powerproject from Asta Development.

Dr Mark Holden, Resource Manager, Pera Technology, explained: “R&D projects are high risk and things change throughout the process. We need to be able to plan the entire process realistically, identify the skills, resources and experience and hence calculate the cost of research. Before we used Asta Powerproject we had only our account system and spreadsheets. Information was not always up to date, and not easily shared as people had their own versions. The task was made harder because we operate out of several geographic locations. The driver was to find one system to be an accurate information and communication tool for all.”

Pera Technology looked at a number of systems: “We chose Asta Powerproject,” said Mark, “because, not only did it compare well on price and benefits, it was more robust and had stronger support. Our interaction with the sales team was encouraging, it is UK-based and we felt they understood their software so well it gave us more confidence – we believed Asta’s sales support would be better – and two years down the line it has proved to be so.”



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Pera Technology is a leading new product development (NPD) contractor working with a consortium of companies of all sizes from across Europe. It helps clients to identify and create the best ideas for their business using in-house technology expertise to pin-point the scientific or other capabilities it might need. It also helps source appropriate funding for the project and can provide the services of its own renowned grant proposal writing team. Pera Technology project manages the whole programme to project delivery, de-risking the NPD process. It is essential, therefore, that Pera Technology is able to ensure all stages of a project proceed to plan in order to meet all requirements of its clients.

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▶ PERA TECHNOLOGY'S FOCUS ON TRAINING PROVED THE RIGHT STRATEGY

Asta carried out training on site with all of the staff, 35 UK users and those working from Estonia and Spain. Pera Technology was in the process of reorganising and had a cultural shift to make, since most people liked working with their spreadsheets.

"It was cost-effective to carry out the training in-house, in fact half the price of our investment with Asta was for the training service to implement Asta Powerproject," Mark explained. "Asta gave us good guidance on how long it would take to implement a cultural change, from installation to seeing benefits that would make us understand and trust the software – and they were accurate! We liked the close links with Asta: it got to know our business model and how we operate, and tailored the training for our business."

“Gaining a greater understanding of Asta Powerproject portfolio management gives us KPIs and new views that we didn't have before; it gives us the ability to identify earlier the projects that need help and to predict what the final spend will be. Our ultimate goal was to be in control of our system and have the experience to do whatever we needed to do.”

During the second year of implementation, Pera Technology is working towards a better understanding of portfolio management to bring better control and further benefits. "Gaining a greater understanding of Asta Powerproject portfolio management gives us KPIs and new views that we didn't have before; it gives us the ability to identify earlier the projects that need help and to predict what the final spend will be. Our ultimate goal was to be in control of our system and have the experience to do whatever we needed to do. We have been able to do this; I have become proficient enough to help support, advise and train all Asta Powerproject users. We call Asta only when we are doing something new and want to get the most out of the software. The training also showed us how the software can help with document control and managing change -- so placing training and support as a focus for our reorganisation needs proved the right decision."



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▶ ASTA'S OPEN SOURCE NATURE INTEGRATES WITH IN-HOUSE SYSTEMS

With 20 project managers and 50 people supplying resources to deliver up to 80-plus projects, Mark needed to have visibility of all projects and resource, plus integration with the existing systems they had grown to rely on. "Asta Powerproject gave the project managers the depth of view they needed while senior management could step back and see the bigger picture," he said.

"It has helped us to plan further ahead, before we could only look one month ahead – now we have a top-level plan to the end of all projects. But the added benefit for us is the link to our finance system. We were happy with our accounts system and wanted to keep it; to accommodate this Asta wrote a macro that allowed finance to talk with the software. This means we can trust the figures that come out of Asta Powerproject because they come directly from our own system. Asta doesn't assume you use only its tools – it caters for an open source environment and that is much more beneficial to us. The project managers have greater ownership of deliverables because of this visibility. We have made progress in improving our predictions and can now see what resource is needed urgently or what we might need in 6 months' time. We now have a way of predicting what our future concerns should be -- and most importantly, we have cross-sharing of information."

▶ REMOTE ACCESS BECOMES DUAL BENEFIT

Pera Technology had a central network and database, but following a management buyout it now operates from two locations. Estonia currently uses Asta Powerproject remotely. A database and server in the UK hold all data. Explained Mark, "Estonia works through remote desktop via the internet, a visual picture is transferred so if connection is lost they perceive no problem and see no difference in the software at all. We took a number of Asta's remote desktop options of user licences



connecting through the network. This has proved a dual benefit since anyone travelling or working out of the office from the UK can also use it. We also have a number of Web Access licences. For all 6 competency areas of different technical expertise we have web access: everyone in the company has access to the data appropriate to their needs – this is a cost-effective way of working."

“ Our key goals were to achieve more programmes finishing on time: before we used Asta Powerproject 50 percent used to overrun: last year 80 percent of our projects finished on time. ”

▶ ASTA POWERPROJECT BRINGS DEEPER INSIGHT INTO REPORTING

Reports are delivered to senior management regularly; this has been made a more efficient and accurate procedure by exporting data directly from Asta Powerproject and distributing electronically to all stakeholders. Asta's Business Intelligence is proving beneficial to senior management whose need is to see the top-level dashboard information they need, while allowing project managers to have a more detailed view.

"We are learning how to use this Business Intelligence tool for better reporting. We took some simple KPIs to build into existing reports and, to satisfy senior management requirements, Asta is helping us to trial a graphical view which is proving more visible than a screen of numbers. Since using Asta Powerproject for reporting we have a deeper insight, alerts to what might be late and who is responsible, and a clear picture of exactly how many deliverables we have. With 1500-plus contractual deliverables to submit to the EC over the next 2 to 3 years this visibility is crucial."

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▶ HELPING TO ACHIEVE GOALS

Pera Technology has a contract with the EC on deliverables. If it doesn't manage to fulfil on the requirements it is obliged to return some of the funding. While this is only a small percentage per deliverable, it can add up over 1500 projects. A key goal of implementing Asta Powerproject was to mitigate the risk of under achieving and preserve total funding.

Mark explained, "Our key goals were to achieve more programmes finishing on time: before we used Asta Powerproject 50 percent used to overrun: last year 80 percent of our projects finished on time. We did have a number of projects that went into overspend, but we would finish those for free to meet our client deadlines. That is not sustainable and certainly not desirable! We needed to bring that level down, and I'm happy to say it is coming down, by better project management. We are confident we will see further improvement now that we have a big picture approach."

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▶ ABOUT PERA TECHNOLOGY

Pera Technology helps identify and create the best ideas for a business. It uses in-house technology expertise to pin-point the scientific or other capabilities that might be needed, and then project manages the whole programme to make it work. It tests, refines and improves, making sure the right infrastructure is in place. Because Pera Technology knows thousands of companies, it can also build complete supply chains of partners right the way through to the end customer. Pera Technology helps companies realise ideas, helping them to become more stable and valuable, and more able to compete in an ever-challenging world.

For more information visit <http://www.peratechnology.com>

▶ 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.