



Richard Crookes Constructions

A conversation with Alison Kindred

Finance Manager, Richard Crookes Constructions

Finance Manager, Alison Kindred, talks about how IBM Planning Analytics have transformed the planning and forecasting process at Richard Crookes Constructions (RCC). Operating throughout NSW and the ACT, RCC is a private, family owned Construction Company that has been delivering projects as promised; on-time and budget, safely and to the highest quality since 1976.

T: RCC has a strong heritage and a deep commitment to its core values as a family-owned business – how would you say that history has driven the way you consumed data as an organisation, and what prompted you to look at alternatives?

AK: Historically, RCC's data was contained over a variety of data sources, including core construction software as well as various excel spreadsheets. As the company grew, we found the task of collating the board reports and business forecasts increasingly onerous and potentially subject to error.

The RCC board report collates “to-date” data as well as forecasts out over 3 financial years. It was really the need to get that functional-

ity more streamlined that was the catalyst for engaging Tridant and going down the IBM Planning Analytics (TM1) path.

The forecasting capability that IBM Planning Analytics provides has delivered on the promise of enabling fast access to accurate information, which is key to continuing to grow and evolve our business.

T: Having been through the labour and time intensive excel driven planning process, how do you see the interplay between the new technology and your staff?

AK: I think the main shift has been in what we now use our resources for. Where previously the bulk of the finance team's focus was

spent on data collation and entry, we are now able to refocus that energy towards analysing that data knowing that it is based on a true and accurate reflection of our business.

T: I know that you are still in the early days of the implementation, but what kind of impact points are you already seeing as a result of having this capability?

AK: For us the point was always about ensuring that our tools do not hold us back from moving forward as a successful company.

We view these tools as inherent to our long-term journey, providing better, more valuable information with integrity we can rely on in order to make the kind of decisions that will contribute to our future success.

We see Tridant, and IBM Planning Analytics as an ongoing business development partnership, and as our understanding of TM1 grows so will our ability to leverage its value across the whole organisation.

The board report is really just the first step in helping the organisation understand and use the technology.

T: As a chartered accountant, what trends do you see shaping the future of the industry?

AK: Accounting as a function is definitely going beyond the realms of traditional accounting systems and I absolutely feel that the ability to harness increasingly complex analytical capabilities will be the way of the future.

It's really the layer that has the ability to bring together the different functions within an organisation and use the data to drive greater collective value.

From our perspective, being able to use Planning Analytics in this way will mean that we have the entire business process – from tender to solution to forecasting to finishing projects – covered.

T: We have spoken a lot about the value the technology has brought the organisation, can you tell us a little bit about the value that Tridant brought to the process?

AK: I have never worked with consultants that have been as professional as the Tridant team. From start to finish they have been absolutely brilliant.

As an organisation we spent almost two years clarifying what it was we needed but we were unsure how best to get there, so having Tridant come in and create the right architecture was immensely valuable.

I cannot recommend Tridant enough; their whole approach from the very beginning was extremely professional.

From the architecture and tool selection right through to the weekly reporting, they made it really easy for us to stay on track. We had very open lines of communication throughout and Tridant's team – both on and offsite – were always available to us and very responsive to our questions and feedback.

T: Alison, based on your experience with RCC's data analytics implementation, what advice would you give to other companies commencing their Data Analytics journey?

AK: Be very clear about the outcome you require. Spend time in the early stages to really hone your requirements.

That was a piece of advice that we received very early on in our own journey and it has proven to be key to our ability to stay on time, on budget and achieve the outcome we needed. ●

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