One of the TOP ICT employers in the UK - Leeds City Council's Corporate ICT Services, successfully managed to implement modern technologies (Hydra) to deliver organisational change to over 13,000 users, including 20 project managers, 80 resource managers and 300 ICT staff, across eight Council departments and still managed to keep its staff and customers happy.

"We selected the Hydra Management solution) not only because it provided us with an integrated suite of modules that best met our requirements in all areas at an affordable price, but also because Hydra was the only system able to demonstrate adequately the full resource management capability we needed."
Dave Rowson, Head of Projects and Resources for Corporate ICT Services
Leeds City Council

About Leeds City Council

Leeds City Council (LCC) is the second largest metropolitan local authority in England, UK. With over 35,000 employees, the Council delivers more than 500 separate local authority services to a population of over 715,000, who live and work in the city and surrounding areas.
Leeds is a prosperous, vibrant and international city that serves over 75 different nationalities. Located near to the geographical centre of the UK, Leeds attracts tourism and international business from all over the world and has eight overseas partnering cities, including: Durban (South Africa); Colombo (Sri Lanka) and Siegen in Germany, among others.

Pressure Points

As a public sector organisation, LCC faces constant change from both within the organisation and from government legislation demanding continual improvements in service delivery and efficiency, due to public accountability.
Managing this demand, the Corporate ICT Services at LCC is accountable for an ICT Development Programme of £10m per year and operational running costs of £20m. Over a five-year period, the department had doubled in size in relation to the number of ICT users and projects being managed, which could be up to 40 major projects running at any one time.
LCC found that the independent systems being used to support the lifecycle of programmes and projects, including: MS Project for project planning; operational resource plans held in individual spreadsheets, and an independent separate timesheet application, were no longer able to provide the level of management information required to plan and manage its workload. As a result, LCC's Corporate ICT Services were encountering issues in relation to the ability to deliver projects effectively and efficiently whilst maintaining good levels of customer service and support.

Dave Rowson, Head of Projects and Resources for Corporate ICT Services at Leeds City Council, said: "With an organisation as complex as Leeds City Council, we faced a challenge in balancing the demand for new technology to enable change, whilst containing the costs of delivery for a full range of ICT support services."

"In order to overcome these challenges, we were specifically looking towards an improvement in the commissioning, delivery and communication of programme and project status. Essentially we needed to receive income for all chargeable work undertaken and required an integrated resource management tool to manage the demands of the development and operational workload".

Finding the right solution

As part of the extensive procurement exercise for a program and project portfolio management system, it was essential that the right solution would fit with the LCC corporate strategy and could, at some point, be extended across the entire council.

Dave continues: "We required total programme visibility, so the solution would have to enable us to improve communication with project stakeholders and staff who were deployed at various office locations across the council."

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Solution Found...Time to implement Hydra

In September 2005, the implementation of Hydra began with the deployment and close-working of a joint LCC and Hydra implementation team. The team comprised of a Project Board, the LCC and Hydra Project Manager plus an LCC implementation team together with Hydra's Application Consultant, Technical Consultant and the Product Trainer.

After initial scoping, planning and a two-month pilot to validate the Hydra toolset, Hydra was deployed with a series of activities that had pre-defined gateways approved by the Project Board.

Joanne Miklo, ICT Resources Manager at Leeds City Council, who is responsible for managing the teams involved, said: "Due to the scale of implementing Hydra across a large ICT department, a clear communications plan was paramount throughout the rollout to effectively sell the benefits of the required changes in organisation process and culture that we faced".

For this, LCC and HYDRA ran briefing workshops at multiple levels within the organisation as well as active follow-up post product training to ensure the updated process and product were well received. Alongside the product training, LCC also managed the business change in relation to processes and procedures. To ensure consistent application of these practices,

HYDRA, LCC and an external training provider (Remarc), delivered joint training around best practice resource management and project management. Joanne added: "This was absolutely key to the success of the implementation and the need for this cannot be understated enough to deliver successful organisational change. The commitment of both organisations' implementation teams has been excellent and has been a major factor in the success of this project".

Project Delivery and success

The project was delivered in phases, the Core Modules – Hydra Manager and Personal in phase one and then additional functionality in a second phase.

LCC produced a benefits realisation plan that focussed on the project management area alone for Hydra Manager and Personal. Working with the HYDRA Account Management team, the focus on the benefits realisation continues and will be an on-going process to ensure LCC maximise their return on the investment made in the HYDRA toolset.

In addition, the level of functionality provided by Hydra is essential for a progressive ICT department that prides itself on its adoption of best practice in ICT delivery and in the development of its people.

Dave Rowson concludes: "We are delighted that Leeds City Council Corporate ICT has just qualified for inclusion in the Top IT Employers 2006 year book. With the focus on Hydra within ICT to support and strengthen our management processes, our drive towards the benefits of a more integrated and co-ordinated planning approach, coupled with tighter resource and financial planning, means ICT will continue to improve the delivery of services to our customers".

About Hydra Management Limited

Hydra Management Limited is one of the UK's leading suppliers of portfolio, project and resource management solutions. With over 100 customers and 50,000 users we have experience in consistently delivering benefit and a return on your investment, on average, in six months or less. Our unique resource scheduler, project blueprinting engine and comprehensive business reporting capability deliver efficiencies to all levels of your organisation.

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