Westpower saves hundreds of man-hours annually

An IBM Maximo implementation for asset management, installed and configured by Certus in 2007 is providing electricity distribution supplier Westpower with an integrated asset management system that is enabling effective works planning and improved delivery monitoring.

Westpower manages everything from the regional exit points in the national grid all the way along the line to the customer. This includes major substations on the West Coast, power poles, transformers and the network lines from Iron Bridge north of Inangahua to Paringa, north of Haast. In managing all these assets, Westpower needs to be able to determine required maintenance and upgrades.

The 20-year-old asset management system at Westpower was struggling to keep pace with the 21st Century. The company's performance levels are scrutinised within the New Zealand regulatory environment, and this requires a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation. The legacy system had not been built with the 2008 legislative requirements in mind, and the system was not fully supported.

Although the process of managing assets hasn't changed significantly in 20 years, the manner in which it has to be done has. Today, regulatory compliance demands far more detail for each asset. The existing system could not provide that degree of statistical data. ▶

CHALLENGE

A geographically remote business that manages electricity substations, poles, power lines and multiple utility assets, Westpower is diversifying its business operations, further expanding its array of assets. It needed a fixed asset register, providing a single source of traceable and auditable data.

WHY MAXIMO FROM CERTUS?

Westpower needed a solution to synchronise all of its systems, creating one point of data input. Maximo's ability to synchronise Westpower's geographic information system (GIS) with asset management meant it was able to create a single asset repository. Certus delivered this using Maximo's built-in integration adapter and US developer activeG's MapEngine GIS integration software. Certus also provided project management skills and experience in coordinating four vendors.

SOLUTION

IBM Maximo for asset management, installed and configured by Certus.

KEY BENEFITS

Savings of hundreds of man-hours annually through eliminated data duplication; risk identification and risk management to meet regulatory requirements; risk profile around asset replacements; metrics for urgent work pending.

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"A lot of legacy systems struggle in that area," says Philip Gardyne of Westpower subsidiary, ElectroNet Services. "They have good information but accessing and formatting it can be difficult and we previously had multiple databases some of which were set up to meet regulatory legislation laid down by the Commerce Commission.

"When there's a problem we need to know what's causing it, whether it's equipment related or possibly associated with wildlife or climatic conditions. Maximo has the functionality to report against all sorts of parameters and failure reporting is particularly important to asset owners."

Westpower knew it was going to have to move to a new system sooner or later. But its legacy system supported Westpower's entire business activities, including its financial management information system (FMIS). First to be upgraded was the FMIS, followed by asset management with a view to future-proofing the business against ongoing regulatory changes.

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>
> **Philip Gardyne**
> **ElectroNet Services**

Choosing the best offering

The requirement for a single repository of assets was driven by a need for integration between its spatial data and asset management data—Westpower wanted its people to be able to access it from each system without having to input it twice. In addition, ElectroNet has recently begun to diversify its revenue streams and it wanted a system capable of adapting to these new opportunities and an expanded range of assets.

Westpower reviewed a number of candidates following recommendations from within the industry. It selected a handful of companies to participate in an RFI process and shortlisted the best candidates to formally present their products. Its final choice came down to an assessment of which system would be capable of meeting Westpower's future needs.

"We needed something that was going to synchronise all of our systems, so we had one point of input." From the formal vendor presentations Westpower selected Certus to put together a scoping document, with a view to ensuring the chosen system would meet at least 95% of its requirements.

Certus delivered the chosen solution using Maximo's built-in integration adapter and US developer activeG's MapEngine GIS integration software. Eagle Technology, a long-time Westpower service provider, worked on the geographical data, creating a schematic that would allow it to feed information into the Maximo asset management system. The data was synchronised by US GIS software provider activeG, which worked with Australian company dotOpen to make sure the information in the GIS was integrated with the asset management system and the data could be accessed via either. ▶

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Coordinating four vendors was a critical aspect of keeping the project within scope, says Gardyne. "We managed to complete the project on time and it came within the budget. Maarten van der Zeyden of Certus did a fantastic job and gave us a lot of assistance. One of the biggest challenges on the project was pulling the whole thing together, and Certus provided a lot of project management skills and experience."

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Meeting project goals

Enabling users to perform their tasks in their usual system, regardless of where the information resides, was a priority. Westpower now has an asset and maintenance management platform integrated with its financial, GIS and works systems. The Maximo workflows monitor Westpower's business processes, ensuring they are performed as defined, and that work stages and approvals are achieved in a timely fashion. Users are able to view the current status of open service requests, and work closure details are captured and automatically updated in Maximo and in the GIS.

"A significant benefit of Maximo is its ability to synchronise our GIS system with our asset management system, and therefore create one repository," says Gardyne. "As a result, we've been able to introduce more stringent business processes that we can manage more effectively."

IBM Maximo has resulted in consistent data entry and asset labelling. "In the past, we've had to input data in multiple systems in order to be able to see it. When you do that, you're relying on users to enter the correct information. The information tended to vary based on the person who was entering it and the way they saw it," says Gardyne. "Location and asset names weren't always consistently described, and the condition assessment wasn't always the same. With one repository, we know we have accurate data."

In all, the project took around 18 months from inception to go-live. "Once we realised the enormity of the task, we established some realistic timelines and a very stringent budget, which were both achieved."

Multiple benefits

As a result of the new system, says Gardyne, Westpower is already realising savings, as well as improvements in efficiency and customer service. "The biggest benefit to us is that our guys can now get on with the job of managing our assets and making sure our customers get the best out of the electrical network. We had a good network but couldn't effectively report against it and had little statistical data to support it. Now we've got that, it gives our customers confidence in what we're doing."

Westpower estimates that hundreds of man-hours are now being saved annually through the reduction in duplication of data entry. A financial audit and an ODV (optimised deprival valuation), a regulatory requirement of the Commerce Commission, are being made faster and more accurate through the information provided by the new system. ▶

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As far as the project outcomes are concerned, Gardyne says Westpower measures its success in its ability to take on the daily challenges of asset management. "The introduction of a new asset management system has allowed Westpower to successfully restructure the asset division and better position itself for future challenges and opportunities."

Gardyne says Certus is an outstanding partner. "From scoping to implementation, from training to assisting us with our business processes, Certus listened to what we wanted and gave us sound advice."

He recognises that any project is only as good as the people who support it and says he and his team were impressed with the degree of ownership Certus took in what Westpower was seeking to achieve. "It's not always easy to find providers who have empathy and understanding for what you're trying to achieve. We can't say enough about the support we continue to get from all of the staff at Certus and we look forward to a long and wonderful partnership with them in the future."

About Westpower

Westpower is a trust-owned electricity distribution company that supplies approximately 18,000 square kilometres of the west coast of the South Island of New Zealand. As well as owning and managing the high voltage electricity network, Westpower's subsidiary ElectroNet provides design, electrical services and mobile phone retail services.

About Certus

Delivering customer value through successful enterprise software projects that align business processes with technology is Certus Solutions core focus and key strength.

Backed by over 20 years experience, Certus designs, develops and integrates enterprise solutions based on IBM software components, implemented to address each client's unique business requirements and environment. As a Premier IBM Business Partner and the largest specialist team of IBM certified professionals across Australia and New Zealand, Certus represents a solid proposition for organisations looking for a full-service enterprise partner, offering a rare depth of expertise across the breadth of the IBM software portfolio.

Certus' experience includes work with some of the region's largest organisations, including Air New Zealand, Aon, Cement Australia, Fonterra, Honda Australia, Tupperware Australia and Westpac.

Owned and operated by its senior management team, Certus employs 100 people servicing over 400 clients from offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland and Wellington.

For further information

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