Sometimes it's safer not to do things by the book

"Helped by the excellent ERP consultancy and knowledge transfer provided by Fujitsu, the new Oracle system has given us the tools we need to increase efficiency."

Adrian Cutts – Executive Director of Resources, Lancashire County Council

SUMMARY OF KEY FACTS

Organisation
Lancashire County Council

Services delivered
ERP consultancy and knowledge transfer to build and deploy an Oracle Financials and Procurement suite of applications

Key metrics
- 1.2 million citizens
- 40,000 employees

Benefits
- **Minimised risk** – a complex implementation was successfully planned and executed on time and without incident
- **Increased productivity** – provides significantly improved functionality to streamline operations and improve resource usage
- **Reduced costs** – has forced use of corporate contracts to reduce costs of purchases
- **Optimised system availability** – effective system design is ensuring optimised application performance and reliability
- **Enhanced flexibility** – can be extended to include new functional are as for greater efficiency and operational synergy

Challenge

When you have already been at the heart of the Industrial Revolution that shaped the economic landscape of Britain in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, it's perhaps not surprising that the county of Lancashire is also now forging ahead in the technology revolution.

Lancashire County Council, the local authority for the non-metropolitan county of Lancashire, is responsible for supporting the needs of more than 1.2 million people living in one of the most populous and urbanised shire counties in Britain, and also one of the largest in terms of its contribution to the national economy.

As part of its 40,000-strong workforce the Council has a very capable Technical Team, so when it decided to upgrade and standardise its core systems infrastructure around the Oracle eBusiness Suite the Council chose not to simply contract out the work.

"Most people get consultants in to do a job and when it goes live everyone rubs their hands with glee at how good it is," says project manager Pete Ripley, Principal Accountant (Corporate Financial Systems), Lancashire County Council. *"However, if you've not had any direct involvement in the process, the problem then is how do you support it? So, we said that as a large organisation we have the resources to implement and support the system, but what we don't have is the detailed knowledge – all the tips and tricks that you gain from years of implementing and using a system. So that's what we decided to buy!"*

Solution

Following a competitive procurement through the government procurement catalogue, GCat, Lancashire County Council chose Fujitsu to provide the enterprise resource planning (ERP) consultancy and knowledge transfer services it needed to successfully build and deploy the new Oracle Financials and Procurement suite of applications needed to satisfy the needs of the Council, Lancashire Police and Lancashire Fire & Rescue Service.

"We did a lot of evaluation of the capability of each supplier that we short-listed," comments Pete Ripley, *"and we chose Fujitsu because what came through was a flexibility and willingness to work together with us and help achieve our aims rather that a strict, contract-based approach."*

Under the contract Fujitsu was responsible for providing in-depth training to the Council's staff for all of the key components of the Oracle system, including General Ledger, Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, Core Purchasing &

iProcurement and Cash Management. Fujitsu also effected the knowledge transfer to the Council staff regarding the use of its iTrade solution and, critically, all of the methods it would typically employ to handle a wide range of bespoke developments, such as direct debits in Accounts Receivable, invoice load in Accounts Payable, PO approval workflow, and BACS output.

As well as providing 100 days of 'learning events' geared to different modules and aspects of the system, Fujitsu also developed a version of the system that could be used as a demonstration tool to help the training process. Pete Ripley continues, *"The quality of the learning events run by Fujitsu was generally very good and we were very pleased with the quality of the training and the materials that we got to work on."*

Lancashire County Council was then able to develop and install a second test version of the system with Fujitsu providing any necessary support and advice. Finally the Council built the production version of the system from scratch, with very little involvement from Fujitsu. It also conducted extensive user acceptance testing before the new services eventually went live in a staged rollout, with ongoing support from Fujitsu, firstly in Lancashire Police, then the Council and lastly the Lancashire Fire Service.

"When the Oracle system first went live we were confident that it would work well, which it did and it's been a huge success," explains Pete Ripley. *"As a result, we're now looking at replacing other key systems and Fujitsu is well placed to help us do that, because we've shown that this approach works and we're keen to follow it again in the future. Anyone can read or use a manual, but by learning the practical tips and tricks you can maximise and future proof the return on your investment."*

Adrian Cutts, Executive Director of Resources, Lancashire County Council, comments, *"Helped by the excellent ERP consultancy and knowledge transfer provided by Fujitsu, the new Oracle system was implemented without incident and has given us the tools we need to increase efficiency. The more we save on back office functions the more resources we can divert to improving the education and social services we provide to the public, which is really what we're here for."*

Benefits

The ERP knowledge transfer and support services provided by Fujitsu have enabled Lancashire County Council to:

- **Minimise risk** – a complex implementation was successfully planned and executed on time and without incident, with comprehensive system scoping, piloting, testing, training and knowledge transfer
- **Increase productivity** – can now take advantage of the system's significantly improved functionality to streamline operations and improve resource usage
- **Reduce costs** – the new system has enforced the use of corporate contracts, so reducing the costs of standard purchases
- **Optimise system availability** – effective system design is ensuring optimised application performance and reliability
- **Enhance flexibility** – the Oracle platform can be extended in the future to include new functional areas for greater efficiency and operational synergy

"Under Fujitsu's expert guidance we have put in an ERP system that is undoubtedly making people more efficient across the organisation," says Pete Ripley. *"However, the biggest savings so far are coming from our improved procurement processes, where using corporate contracts and automated processes means we're reducing the costs of our purchases and there's much less manual authorisation and paper-chasing. We're now keen to make progress on the income-side as we think Oracle will help us get a grip on that and reduce bad-debt."*

Approach

The success of the Oracle implementation is largely due to the detailed project preparation and planning that was undertaken in the first phase of the project. This included the creation of an initial project plan covering all of the knowledge transfer deliverables and a high level outline of the pre and post production activities.

"As one of Lancashire's biggest purchasers the consequences of not being able to pay our suppliers could be dire for some smaller firms," adds Pete Ripley. *"So, our general philosophy was that we would only implement the new Oracle system when we were ready and happy that it was a zero risk option. As a result, rather than setting a fairly arbitrary, fixed deadline, we had built a comprehensive project plan with Fujitsu, which included detailed estimates of the work and resources needed to get the job done. We then just did the maths to work out how long it would all take with the resources that could be allocated – and tested the system to death! Our management were prepared to take this approach, which meant it took longer to go live, but it did mean that they expected the system to be right, from the go live. And it was."*

Expertise

With over 30 years experience of supporting the needs of customers, Fujitsu has a proven track record in providing complex systems integration and management services that reduce costs, improve productivity and customer services and deliver a compelling return on investment. In particular, Fujitsu has more than 4,000 SAP and Oracle specialists worldwide and extensive experience in creating practical ERP solutions and supporting customers with a hands-on approach.

"I have to say that we didn't know quite what to expect with the knowledge transfer approach that we took," comments Pete Ripley, *"but we were certainly impressed by the Fujitsu consultants and their attitude. They very much became part of the team."*

"What pleased me in particular is that we drew up a contract that was really just our best guess as to how things would turn out. However, it became clear that some things weren't necessary, because we had acquired the in-house knowledge to do them ourselves. So, rather than slavishly following the contract, Fujitsu swapped around the services to deliver the best value for us, which is unusual in an IT supplier. This put Fujitsu in a very positive light with the Council, because it showed that it was more interested in our success and in developing a long-term relationship."

ASK FUJITSU

Contact us on +44 (0) 870 242 7998 or
askfujitsu@uk.fujitsu.com or visit uk.fujitsu.com