



Advantage

Issue 1 Winter 2005/6

Delivering advantages to the public sector



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Delivering Advantages to the Public Sector

Agresso provides business management solutions to over 2300 people-based organisations in more than 70 countries. Whether in professional services, the public sector or any other service delivery environment, these organisations recognise that their greatest asset is their people.

Agresso's solutions are ideal for organisations that recognise the only way to deliver their wide range of services effectively is through enabling and encouraging staff to make decisions, take responsibility for their roles and actively respond to the dynamics and pressures their market and working environment dictates. Key public sectors include Education, Local Government, Central Government, Health, Criminal Justice Sector including Emergency Services and Not for Profit organisations.

AGRESSO Business World was developed from the start to meet the specific requirements of Public Sector organisations. It provides fully integrated workflow driven financial processing and business information systems covering core finance &

administration, budgeting, procurement, project costing & billing, human capital management and payroll, coupled with powerful reporting & analysis. Within each key sector, specific solutions have been developed around the AGRESSO core to meet end to end requirements. For example within Education student records management, pre and post awards management, student's debt management and CRM.

AGRESSO provides web and client server based applications that utilise modern technology such as .Net, workflow and portal environments. It offers browser independence and supports Oracle, Microsoft SQL Server and support for the open source standard MySQL RDBMS is being developed during 2006.

AGRESSO in the Public Sector

Nr. 1 position in Central Government Norway and Sweden

Nr. 1 position in Local Government in Norway, Sweden, UK and Ireland

Nr. 1 position in Higher Education in Norway, Sweden and UK

Nr. 1 position in 'Project Portfolio Management' in Europe (Gartner, 2004)

Nr. 6 position globally by license revenue in Local Government (Gartner, 2005)

Nr. 8 position in Europe by license revenue Finance systems

Key Public Sector customers include:-

In the UK & Ireland, Agresso's customers include over 150 Councils (including 72 Councils in Ireland via the Local Government Computer Services Board framework agreement), 60+ Health Trusts (many operating within shared services), over 100 colleges of Further Education, 100+ Universities & Colleges of Higher Education and several Police and Fire Services and Central Government Departments.

Accreditations

Agresso's accreditations include ISO9001, Microsoft Gold Partner Status, Oracle Certified Partners, Citrix, Windows Server 2003, Interoperability – SOAP TCP/MSMQ/SMTP Services, Microsoft .Net, Novell (EMEA Technology Partner of the Year 2005), XML (Global XML Web Services Standard). BASDA certified Euro Compliance, eGIF – Government Interoperability Framework compliant. Agresso are members of BASDA and Intellect and have signed up to the Intellect IT Supplier Code of Best Practice and BASDA Code of Practice (covering product development, testing, quality assurance and documentation).

Meet Agresso at the following events:

- UCISA Conference, Blackpool 8-10 March
- CIPFA Scotland, 9/10th March
- CIPFA Local Authority Accounting Conference, Brighton 16-17 March

- HFMA Shared Services in the NHS, London, 28th March
- BUFDG Manchester, 9-12 April
- Student Records Officers Conference, Warwick, 10-12 April
- CIPFA Annual Conference, Harrogate, 14-15 June

Find out more at www.agresso.com



The Future is Shared



Welcome to the first edition of Advantage magazine which is designed to clearly inform you how we are engaging with the public sector and explain and demonstrate how we can help you.

The demand for accurate, timely information on costs, services and business processes is ever-increasing within the public sector, with higher expectations and lower budgets forming the perennial environment for public service delivery.

Agresso's public sector clients choose us to satisfy this demand.

AGRESSO is basically an analytic business system, creating a finely detailed accounting structure based on costs and people in basic blocks such as finance, HR and payroll systems.

But it is more than this. Current business information is useful, and necessary, but it is of limited value if all it does is tell you that you are doing a poor job.

But by analysing an organisation's people and costs, savings and opportunities for increased revenues can be located, by developing ideas for moving people around or improving processes.

AGRESSO Business World V5.5, which was released this summer, takes this step by helping managers to model new business processes, so they can see where and how they can be optimised. There are aspects of this that are quite revolutionary, such as the easy mapping and monitoring and managing of business processes through graphical interfaces.

Once it has been decided what organisational changes need to be made, managers need information systems that will adapt quickly to any changes made, and help rather than hinder their implementation. AGRESSO assists here as well, by creating an accounting structure which is quick and easy to change.

Admittedly, for smaller councils, running highly specialised systems like AGRESSO and planning and improving processes can still eat up a lot of resources they simply do not have. So the way forward for many will be shared services and shared support.

Fundamentally, the business of running a council or health service trust is similar wherever you are, and neighbouring organisations are largely non-competitive, so they can share the same basic hardware of software and best practice of its implementation, and everybody gains.

The main driver for sharing services and sharing ideas will naturally be cost savings, but also improved services, increased capability and higher productivity – the whole Gershon agenda of boosting efficiency.

It is important to stress this is about so much more than just sharing nuts and bolts – it is about developing and sharing ideas for the best ways of working, which can be built up over time by groups of organisations working together. If one person is attempting something on their own, it will be tough. But if 55 people are

attempting the same thing, there will be a steady flow of ideas being exchanged, and it will be easy.

This is also where an advisor like Agresso can help out, by stepping in and offering the benefit of our long experience of working in similar situations. The future is shared.

John Crooks,
Managing Director, Agresso Ltd.

News Stories

Agresso acquires Distinction

Agresso has acquired specialist education software provider, Distinction Systems, further strengthening its number one position in the post-16 education sector.

Distinction offers a range of financial accounting, HR, student administration, CRM and e-business products, which is complementary to AGRESSO Business World software suite with its integrated financial, project, procurement, HR and payroll modules. Together the combined companies will be able to offer a full enterprise resource planning solution to further and higher education customers.

"There are some very strong synergies between the two companies, with both recognised as having real expertise in further and higher education," says John Crooks, MD of Agresso in the UK. "The acquisition gives Agresso customers access to Distinction's powerful and unique education-specific systems, while the backing of our international parent group, Unit 4 Agresso, will provide additional resources to develop our range of products and services in the most effective way."

The two companies have a number of customers in common and a number of Agresso customers are already implementing Distinction software, such as its PPAM pre- and post-award management system for higher education research establishments. Meanwhile Distinction's Microsoft-based CRM system, which helps build powerful marketing databases, will be fully integrated and developed under Agresso's ownership.

"This is a move which is extremely good news for the further and higher education sectors," says Steve Bryan, managing director of Distinction Systems. "Agresso and Distinction will be able to combine their expertise to continue to develop focused solutions, based on technological innovation, which deliver tangible benefits for existing and future customers."



Wakefield adopts e-procurement for greater efficiencies

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council is implementing the e-procurement module of AGRESSO Business World suite as part of its strategy to streamline the procurement process, reduce costs through greater efficiency and make it easier for suppliers to trade with the council.

The West Yorkshire council uses Roses electronic marketplace for the public sector, allowing staff to buy online from their desktop from approved suppliers. The Council also conducts tenders electronically and uses purchasing cards for staff out on the road to buy low-value items. It now aims to use the AGRESSO business information suite, which it acquired in December 2003, as the hub to hold all this information together and to gain greater control over internal purchasing.

The Roses marketplace has already been successfully interfaced with AGRESSO and tested.

"A council officer will be able to go into Roses or AGRESSO, place an order electronically, receive an electronic delivery note and settle the account electronically," says Alan Kirkham, head of partnering and procurement at Wakefield MDC. "Our aim is to create an efficient and low-maintenance process. AGRESSO will then be used to monitor how much we spend, with whom and when."

The council is also integrating AGRESSO with its document management system. If an invoice matches the order and delivery note, it will be paid automatically and won't require any human intervention. However, if there is a query over an invoice, it can be scanned and routed electronically throughout the council to resolve the query and get appropriate approvals.

Alan Kirkham says automation of the procure-to-pay process will not only save the council money, but will reduce errors because staff will key in less purchasing data, especially where supplier catalogues exist within the integrated marketplace. The AGRESSO procurement module is being rolled out to council officers during 2006.

AGRESSO systems to help fight world poverty

DFID, the Department for International Development, has appointed Agresso as the lead implementation partner for the £11 million ARIES project to replace its activities reporting and e-information system.

DFID leads the British government's fight against world poverty and has three UK offices employing 1400 staff, plus more than 1500 people in 69 offices around the world from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. DFID also has a presence in 23 UK embassies mainly in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The AGRESSO Business World and Alito applications will be installed on servers in the UK and delivered to the global locations via satellite.

More than a billion people, one in five of the world's population, live in extreme poverty. This means they live on less than 65p a day. Ten million children die before their fifth birthday, most of them from preventable diseases. More than 113 million children do not go to school.

In a world of growing wealth, such levels of human suffering and wasted potential are not only morally wrong, they are also against our own interests, the DFID says.

Agresso will head a consortium of companies to support DFID in redesigning its management information system (MIS) coding structure and rationalising its underlying IT systems to meet the department's financial, procurement, reporting and performance management needs.

The key to ARIES lies in replacing DFID's numerous, disparate legacy systems with the integrated financial, procurement and project costing and billing modules of AGRESSO Business World 5.5 in a five year implementation, licensing and support contract worth £6.5 million.

Agresso's business information system will be enhanced by a suite of strategic procurement applications from its partner Alito that together will offer DFID an unrivalled end to end e-procurement capability. The two systems interface seamlessly to provide supplier, sourcing and contract management through to purchase order processing, invoice management and payment.



In addition, HELM will provide ARIES with business process change management consultancy and another Agresso partner, Optimum, is responsible for end user training on the new systems.

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Agresso won the contract in competition with other companies offering alternative solutions such as Oracle, SAP etc. Gordon Alexander, DFID's ARIES project manager, said: *"We liked the consistent look and feel of the AGRESSO Business World modules which are all web-based. It appears to be a flexible solution with strong reporting capabilities, high quality data capture and good accessibility of information."*

He added: *"Very importantly, AGRESSO scored highly on the intensive performance testing we carried out across our communication links, even low bandwidth satellite to some of our more remote locations."*

John Crooks, managing director of Agresso in the UK, said: *"This is an extremely prestigious project and we are very proud to be implementation partner for an impressive consortium. Agresso, Alito and HELM all have very strong public sector customer bases and this DFID contract proves our suitability to deliver a large and complex solution for a global organisation with very demanding information management and reporting requirements."*

www.dfid.gov.uk

Forward-thinking electronic services

Halton Borough Council decided to replace its outdated accounting systems with web-enabled financial management applications. What effect is this having on service delivery targets?

One of the most common dilemmas facing IT directors is how to ensure that the systems they buy and install today don't become redundant or unworkable in the future. This is a particularly pressing challenge for IT professionals in the public sector who not only need to provide best value to the tax-paying public but are also required to meet e-government targets set by central government.

Halton Borough Council in Cheshire is one local authority that has successfully equipped itself for electronic services by being smart and forward-thinking in its choice of systems. Back in 2001 when e-government was its infancy and the efficiency agenda was but a twinkle in Sir Peter Gershon's eye, the council decided to replace its outdated accounting systems with web-enabled financial management applications that would help streamline its procurement processes and stand it in good stead for an increasingly electronic future.

"We chose Agresso, because it not only delivered a tremendously flexible and effective financial management information system, but because it was also able to deliver web-based transactional processing and had a clear development path which fitted closely to our electronic service delivery objectives," says Roy Webster, AGRESSO project manager at Halton Borough Council. "When the Gershon agenda then imposed its own additional demands for efficiencies, we found we were in an excellent position to respond to these using our AGRESSO platform."

The financial modules of the system have been live at the council since 2004, but recent developments mean that the full potential of AGRESSO Business World is really coming into play.

The council is currently linking AGRESSO Business World with the customer relationship management (CRM) system it uses in Halton Direct Link (HDL), its one-stop shops and 24-hour call centre for dealing with local residents. The CRM operates with generic staff dealing with 370 processes. Working with Agresso it has introduced a solution based on web services, which allows HDL staff using this front-end CRM solution to access customer information directly from the back-office Agresso system.

"For example, if a resident gets an invoice from the council which he or she thinks is incorrect, they can go to one of our one-stop shops and the adviser will be able to gain immediate, real-time access to Business World through the CRM to check the invoice," says Roy Webster. "One of the big problems for councils using CRM systems has been how to enable access to back-office systems and bring customer information into the front office. Agresso was able to provide a fast and practical solution to this dilemma."

The next phase of development is to move beyond data interrogation of Business World towards transactional capability. This will mean that citizens will be able to go into a one-stop shop to clear their debt with the council, record a change of address or amend their payment plan and this will be updated directly in the AGRESSO system. Using XML schema, data will be transferred from the CRM system and into Business World.

In addition to helping make the council more accessible to citizens, the AGRESSO system is also proving fundamental in improving internal efficiency. When looking for a future path, Halton Borough Council had ambitious plans to rationalise its procurement spend and increase the efficiency of its procurement processes. These requirements were reflected in its original specification for a new financial management system.

The council is now achieving these aims with the help of Agresso. *"Using web-based requisitioning, we have been able to cut out manual paper-based processes, save time through electronic authorisations, acknowledge receipt of goods electronically and process invoices against purchase orders more quickly,"* says Jean Morris, Head of e-Procurement and Financial Support Services at Halton Borough Council. *"Speeding up these processes means that we have increased the output of clerical staff working in purchasing and invoice processing."*

Using Agresso's e-procurement modules also means that the council can access management information about spend levels, profiles and habits which contribute not only to the further development of its e-procurement strategy, but will lead to improved negotiation of contracts and supplier discounts.

Halton Borough Council is in a strong position for a future in which more and more trading will be done electronically. It will be able process XML orders and invoices once its suppliers are ready to provide and process them. It has also integrated Business World with IDeA:marketplace, an electronic

marketplace for local government run by the Improvement & Development Agency. This means that staff will ultimately be able to search goods from approved suppliers on the marketplace and then bring orders back into AGRESSO to get the appropriate approvals. The benefit will be fewer errors in order processing and the confidence that contract prices are being adhered to.

"The simplicity of this implementation was impressive, given the behind-the-scenes complexity of setting up transactional processing over the internet," says Webster.

A link has also been set up so that staff can log into AGRESSO web requisitioning and the IDeA marketplace from the council's intranet. Future developments include document imaging for invoices, electronic matching between orders and invoices and the ability to integrate invoices directly into the council's financial system.

All of this has been made possible by the flexibility of the AGRESSO system. *"Because AGRESSO gives us the opportunity to implement against a modular structure, we have been able to develop key functions and to plan for the next stage with confidence,"* concludes Mrs Morris.

It is this kind of flexibility and future-proofing that is the holy grail for public sector IT professionals when implementing new systems. Halton Borough Council provides a great example of how web-based software it originally selected over three years ago has equipped it extremely well for a more electronic – and efficient – future.

"The simplicity of this implementation was impressive, given the behind-the-scenes complexity of setting up transactional processing over the internet,"

Roy Webster, AGRESSO project manager at Halton Borough Council

Sharing fire rescue services

Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service have been sharing services since 2002. How does it work in practice and what are the advantages?

Since Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service set up a shared service using AGRESSO Business World, Agresso's financial and procurement system, in November 2002, not only have the two organisations enjoyed substantial business benefits, but their joint initiative has successfully accommodated a number of changes.

Wigan MBC has been the lead authority for Greater Manchester Fire (GMF), the UK's second largest fire authority, since 1986 and the two organisations have a history of sharing systems and support functions. When it came to procuring a new financial system to replace the outdated mainframe ledger system used by both organisations, it therefore made sense for them to act together.

"We combined our resources to develop the specification, conduct the procurement and evaluate suppliers, allowing us to draw on each other's expertise," says Ged Murphy, director of finance and technical services at GMF.

Working together in this way provided cost efficiencies for both organisations. *"It was important for us both to have access to powerful functionality at a reasonable cost,"* says Ian Kell, deputy director of finance and IT at Wigan MBC. *"Economically, it wouldn't have made sense for us to act alone. Agresso provided the most economic solution for our joint needs and we were able to share the cost of the acquisition."*

Once the organisations had selected AGRESSO, a joint implementation team set about designing the system according to the best way of doing business for both authorities. *"We wanted to harmonise best practice in our business processes and make the best use of the functionality,"* says Murphy. *"AGRESSO is sufficiently flexible that you can tailor it to your requirements, which means you retain control over how much business change you introduce."*

Although the organisations implemented a "vanilla" version of AGRESSO as far as possible, they were also able to adapt

features to reflect their different business requirements. For example, GMF needed software that could deal with uniform ordering and the maintenance of water hydrants, while Wigan MBC needed reporting functionality for its schools. Both were successfully accommodated within AGRESSO.

Wigan MBC hosted the AGRESSO system on its servers, providing GMF with access to the software via a high-speed link, and supported the system through a service level agreement with GMF.

While the biggest benefit of the shared service has been financial in terms of sharing the cost of new technology, training and consultancy, there were other less tangible benefits that were accrued on an ongoing basis. *"We have been able to share expertise and best practice by working together,"* says Kell.

As evidence of this best practice exchange, Kell cites the example of administering transport costs. GMF uses the project costing and billing module in AGRESSO to administer its transport costs and the council wanted to move its transport department over to the system. However, there was some resistance from staff who didn't want to change system. *"We took them to see how transport costing works at GMF and we have now built a module to administer costs for our refuse collection and other vehicles,"* says Kell. *"If you can demonstrate that something different works elsewhere, it is a huge benefit and helps to win people over."*

Two years ago, Wigan MBC decided it wanted to bring Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust onto the AGRESSO system. The trust is a separate legal entity, funded by the council, which provides library, leisure centre, parks and playground services etc. This new member of the shared service was successfully accommodated and set up as a separate client on AGRESSO. And last year, the council brought a housing association into the shared service, again as a separate client within a common system.

More recently, Wigan MBC and GMF have adjusted arrangements again to meet their changing business requirements. The two authorities have decided to implement the procurement module of AGRESSO separately, while

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Ian Kell, deputy director of finance and IT at Wigan MBC

maintaining some common elements of the system. Meanwhile, Cheshire Fire Service has joined GMF in a fire shared service, using AGRESSO as its core financial system and adopting the GMF model as the foundation of its own implementation.

GMF now provides a service level agreement to Cheshire for frontline system support and the system is hosted under a managed service arrangement by Agresso's strategic partner Netstore, giving the organisations further cost efficiencies and guaranteed service levels.

"Cheshire Fire has saved on procurement, implementation and support costs by adopting our model," says Murphy. *"The benefit for us is that the income through the SLA gives us access to more resources."*

There is the potential for other fire authorities to join the shared service, particularly as they are increasingly being encouraged to collaborate on a regional basis and are required to meet the Gershon efficiency targets. The more organisations that join the shared fire service, the greater the savings that will be made by all its members.

Meanwhile Wigan MBC is maintaining its shared service with the leisure trust and housing association, while at the same time continuing to provide support functions to GMF, such as BACS administration and treasury management. The collaboration and sharing of best practice between Wigan MBC and GMF will continue with joint reviews of AGRESSO releases and consultation about system changes. In effect what was one shared service has now morphed into two.

The joint initiative between Wigan MBC and GMF has demonstrated considerable flexibility, allowing the organisations to bring in new clients to the shared service or retire clients as circumstances change. It is this kind of flexibility that will really help public sector organisations to embrace the potential of shared services without taking unnecessary risks and make significant steps towards achieving the ambitious efficiency targets demanded by the Gershon agenda.



Smart Policing



With the police under mounting pressures to tackle threats such as terrorism how can IT systems help? Can integrated IT systems make a difference?

Reducing mobile phone theft, tackling anti-social behaviour, fighting terrorism – the priorities of modern policing are ever-changing, and forces must be able to respond quickly and flexibly to new demands.

One of the keys to a quick response is accurate information about the current position in terms of resources available, and where and how they are deployed. But with many forces running a range of out of date and poorly integrated IT systems across their finance and HR departments, it can be hard for them to obtain the information they need to respond to new situations efficiently and effectively.

Devon and Cornwall Police head of finance Colin Papworth says that until this year, his organisation's fragmented systems had simply not been able to deliver the sort of management information that a modern police force needs.

"We had a number of individual systems, on average 15 years old, and had had to create a complex set of interfaces and procedures to bring together the information we needed to manage the Constabulary," he says.

"But we had developed these systems as far as we could, and they were not meeting our management information needs.

"So we set out a clear vision: to integrate our finance, HR, procurement and payroll activities so as to reduce the time needed to maintain the relevant databases and allow us to be much more informed about all our resources – our people, assets and finances."

In May, following a tender process, the force signed a contract with Agresso to replace its separate finance, HR and payroll systems with AGRESSO Business World. Because the new system is integrated it has the added advantage of being a powerful communication tool, through which staff from all over the organisation can interrogate the system and obtain accurate and up to date information, Papworth says.

"In the past different people obtained different information from different systems, which created confusion and took a great deal of unnecessary effort to resolve." The ability of different employees to update the same system will also build a sense of ownership of the data, he says.

The new system should also generate significant cash savings, Papworth says. *"Previously we were supported by a number*

of external agencies for payroll and maintenance, which was relatively expensive compared with the costs of running AGRESSO."

One of the most important elements of the system is that it integrates with the Bluelight police e-procurement marketplace developed by the Improvement and Development Agency, Papworth says. Devon and Cornwall Police will use the marketplace to access approved national, regional, collaborative and local contracts and supplier details, build and access electronic catalogues, compare prices and purchase goods and services. Approved items are automatically converted to purchase orders, and automatic three-way matching of invoice to goods received to orders streamlines the procurement process and creates high quality management information to help manage costs.

"A lot is happening in parallel," Papworth says. *"We are implementing Bluelight alongside AGRESSO, so when the two are ready they will just plug and play. It will allow us to integrate the supply chain from end to end."*

By May 2006 the force will be ready to realise the fruits of its new system, drawing off overarching management information that will help it improve its business processes.

"What you find with a lot of organisations is that they're required to make very difficult decisions but the data they have is not up

to date or accurate," Papworth says. *"But we will be able to use very sophisticated reporting tools to inform complex decisions."*

Devon & Cornwall joins the Derbyshire, Essex and Northumbria forces in Agresso's wide and growing customer base across police, fire, the health service and local government. And importantly, the new deal has been reached as a framework agreement which could be used by other bodies, so now it is available for the whole of the criminal justice system, police and emergency services.

Anwen Robinson, Agresso's Government Business Director, says the pattern that is likely to emerge among users will be one of shared services across regions. *"This is the way things are going to go, since shared services are driven by efficiency savings – you set it up once in a region and it meets the requirements of multiple requirements. It is the same with the police as with local authorities: the forces in an area share the same regional identity, and have broadly the same requirements."*

She says that AGRESSO's close integration with the Bluelight marketplace will also be a key factor to its growth in the police sector. *"Flexible procurement is crucial to the emergency sector, as it needs to be responsive."*

The police forces of the future will thus be better equipped with that unsung but key weapon against crime: management information.

"Previously we were supported by a number of external agencies for payroll and maintenance, which was relatively expensive compared with the costs of running AGRESSO."

Colin Papworth, Devon and Cornwall Police, head of finance

Halting the compliance frenzy



David Blundell of Netstore says organisations can achieve compliance and technology confidence in a fragmented market.

The proportion of IT budget being consumed by compliant focused technologies continues to rise.

Turning to point solutions to identify relevant content or audit email usage policies only creates a morass of disparate technologies addressing piecemeal legislation, resulting in duplication and compliance silos.

In order to regain control over their compliance led investment, organisations need a technology supplier who can manage their compliance requirements as a service, based upon clearly defined processes and policies, and driven by a Service Level Agreement (SLA) tailored to their needs.

The compliance investment frenzy has contributed to the reinvigoration of the IT industry that has occurred over the past 18 months – with a plethora of small organisations appearing to maximise the market confusion. Topping the list of must have technologies is email archiving, a market worth more than \$180 million worldwide in 2004, according to International Data Corporation (IDC), up from just \$33 million two years ago. Yet, despite this massive investment in archiving, many organisations are far from meeting their compliance needs. The majority of organisations still do not fully understand what email compliance entails or how to approach it.

In a market dominated by technology vendors with point solutions, primarily focused at email archiving, is it any wonder

that the majority of ‘compliance’ implementations address only this area?

Combine lack of confidence with the high-perceived cost of compliance and many organisations feel both exposed and unable to comply. Others have entered into a state of panic, investing in ‘bit’ technology that does not integrate or provide any kind of complete compliance solution – leaving them with a multitude of vendors and technologies to manage, escalating costs and no solution.

If organisations are to curtail escalating investment and achieve compliance objectives, the spending frenzy has to stop. How can any organisation invest in a technology solution without first understanding the implication compliance legislation will have on the business?

An initial information security assurance process should be the foundation of any compliance solution. Encompassing legislation, regulation and an organisation’s appetite for risk, this process provides clear direction on the value of information, the risks associated with the use of that information and costs associated with managing those risks.

It is only once these fundamental business issues are understood that policies can be created and technologies implemented to support and enforce those policies – thus reducing the costs associated with duplication and the risks associated with a piecemeal approach to addressing each wave of legislation.

But the challenge associated with managing a multiplicity of vendors delivering point solutions, from policy management and enforcement to forensic services, remains.

By delivering a single, integrated approach that provides a clear route for the management of an organisation’s compliance needs, internal resources can be released to focus on emerging or vertical market legislation, with the resulting policies easily incorporated into the core delivered service.

With one in four UK companies prosecuting employees for email misuse last year and with liability now falling on company directors personally, rather than the company corporately, highly publicised prosecution cases based on email evidence are likely to become a common feature in the news.

Fundamentally, email compliance is not just about retention, but also about usage. Organisations need to know how their

employees are using email and whether they are adhering to email policies. They need tools to highlight and investigate possible misuse.

But if they are to be effective these technologies must be implemented within a policy framework based upon business specific compliance issues and appetite for risk – not implemented piecemeal in a knee jerk reaction to the FSA diktat.

If UK business is to wrest back control over budgets and technologies it has to stop this reactive, panic-stricken investment frenzy.

By understanding the implications of compliance and working with a single supplier who can deliver an integrated set of technologies to support the compliance policy to clear SLAs, organisations can retain control, achieve compliance and attain technology confidence in a fragmented and fast changing market.



Ending site licensing headaches

Anwen Robinson, Agresso’s Government Business Director, explains it is possible to budget wisely for users of new fast-evolving systems

It is clearly a priority for public sector bodies to ensure that software is licensed correctly. But given the pace of change in the sector, it can be difficult to foresee accurately how many users are likely to be working with new or evolving systems.

“When moving from manual, paper based processes or when replacing non integrated solutions, the users affected can span many departments,” says Agresso’s Government Business Director, Anwen Robinson. “It can be very difficult to work out how many end users are likely to be affected by the process change introduced by new software services.”

Take eProcurement for example. The introduction of end to end electronic procure to payment processes can change a mainly centralised function into one where every user can potentially

raise requisitions for good or services. End user licensing implications can change dramatically with the introduction of new processes such as this.

Agresso has introduced software which helps check AGRESSO usage to ensure that customers are correctly licensed. However, the company is also aware of the budgetary constraints that Public Sector organisations have to work within and offer a range of licensing options to help customers achieve compliance. For example, a number of customers have already taken advantage of upgrading to an unrestricted user access site license. Anwen Robinson explains: *“from a budgeting perspective it’s a very attractive option being a one off cost which does not have to be re-visited.”* Monmouthshire County Council and the University of Glasgow are two public sector bodies who have recently upgraded their existing named user licenses for site licenses.

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Anwen Robinson, Agresso’s Government Business Director

Hitting electronic service delivery deadlines



Paul Bettison, the Local Government Association's e-champion, says authorities should not 'beat themselves up' if they miss electronic targets

As UK local authorities near the magic date of 31 December 2005 – the government-prescribed target date for ensuring all their services are available electronically – one pioneer of local e-government feels it is a milestone worth celebrating.

Paul Bettison, the Local Government Association's e-champion, says the 2005 targets and its associated rigour of annual 'IEG' (Implementing E-Government) Statements has been a useful exercise, whether or not the target is wholly met by all.

"The whole aim of IEG was to move local government down a path to modern service delivery, and it has most certainly achieved that. Has it herded every single council into the corral of total service delivery? Maybe not. But they are all undoubtedly a great deal further down the line than they otherwise would have been.

"I do feel, and I have said to ministers, that nobody should beat themselves up if 100% of councils have not got 100% of services online by the end of the year. One has to remember that the councils that have struggled are also those that have had to come the furthest, that have found it harder than others to overcome prejudices and doubts, so we shouldn't now chastise them. If one kid is in trouble in a school egg and spoon race it is not the right thing to beat him up: he needs assistance and understanding, and so will those councils."

After the IEG process and the 2005 targets came the Priority Outcomes, a new set of e-government goals for councils that focused in more detail of several specific areas of service delivery and set more detailed targets. Bettison says that this new policy was partially born out of a concern that some councils were not learning enough from the practices of those councils that are pioneering.

The e-government pioneers – and Bettison is leader of Bracknell Forest, a true pioneer in the area of citizen smartcards – had

been able to lead a series of national projects to develop tools and products for use by all councils, as part of the national programme for local e-government. But ministers were concerned that this work was not being properly exploited by all councils, he said.

"It would seem to me that as IEG unfolded, there were some national projects that ministers couldn't believe councils were not forming an orderly queue to join. In some cases large sums of public money were being spent on developing bespoke products for local government, with local government itself doing the work, so it could hardly disown it – but still people were not seeming to care enough to deploy the fruits of that work."

The concept of priority outcomes was therefore designed so councils would have to engage with these areas, where help was available and where others had shown it could be done, Bettison said.

As for smartcards themselves, Bettison says they are a key part of his council's e-government programme.

"Smartcards have a number of distinct advantages over anything else – they prove who you are, and they connect the service you're trying to engage with into a database which then tells you what you're entitled to.

"But the real thing that makes a smartcard appeal to me is that it is so powerful, and yet it requires no skill on the part of the user. I was elected to represent all 115,000 people in the borough, including people to whom the double-click of a mouse is just as hard as a double somersault. But I have yet to meet a human being who cannot derive benefit from using a smartcard."

Whatever the policy arena mapped out in 2006 and beyond, Bettison feels that councils are well-placed to cope. It will always be harder for some councils for others, but the future is bright for local e-government.

Go flexibly with shared services in the NHS

Steve Haines, Agresso's NHS sector manager, believes local NHS trusts should not be forced into following rigid centralised approaches to shared services



NHS Shared Business Services (SBS), the Department of Health's (DoH) initiative to create a national shared service for financial transaction processing in the NHS, was launched on the premise of guaranteed cost savings, access to state-of-the art technology and the ability of trusts to redirect resources from back-office functions and into front-line patient care.

Originally called NHS Shared Financial Services and launched as a pilot in 2002, the national shared service reinvented itself as SBS in April 2005 when it became a joint venture between the DoH and Xansa, the private sector outsourcing company.

Three years after its original inception, not only is SBS failing to deliver cost savings, but NHS trusts are increasingly finding that it doesn't provide them with sufficient flexibility to meet their needs.

SBS guarantees savings of 20 per cent on trusts' existing in-house costs, which is a strong pull, particularly for those trusts that are under-performing. However, there is little evidence from trust managers that such savings are being realised.

The promise of savings is often made on a false premise – looking at the overall cost of running a financial service, including people, buildings and IT support. But the reality is that even if a trust gets rid of all its finance staff and outsources to SBS, the room will be redeployed not sold and there will still be some financial management required at the local level. Indeed some trusts that have made finance staff redundant or redeployed them have found they need to recruit people back into the trust to manage financial operations.

SBS takes a model that has had some success in the private sector and tries to impose it on the public sector. But while the practice of centralising individual processes, such as HR or finance, may work well in a private company, the NHS is

a very different beast. There are lots of complexities and local variations within the NHS that make a national shared service difficult to replicate.

Local NHS trusts are part of a larger local health economy that has evolved over many years, with many trusts dealing with local suppliers and supporting local businesses. These relationships and local knowledge are lost when a trust outsources to SBS. In this regard, the DoH is putting out conflicting messages. On the one hand, it is realigning primary care trusts with local authority boundaries and encouraging NHS bodies to become more locally accountable. On the other, it is press-ganging them into embracing a centralised service that takes them further away from the communities they serve.

Where shared services have been successful, they have evolved naturally out of good existing relationships between trusts. It is these local relationships and knowledge that are invaluable when creating a shared service. Although there is no optimum size for a shared service, there is a point at which they become less manageable as they grow larger. It is more difficult to effect change – technological and otherwise – in a large shared service, such as SBS.

Indeed some trusts have found that SBS isn't sufficiently flexible to meet their individual requirements, precisely because of its scale. One such organisation is South West Yorkshire Mental Health Trust, which opted in, and then out of, one of the early DoH shared service pilots in favour of independence. It found that the "one size fits all" approach of the national shared service involved too many compromises.

SBS has high-level support at the DoH and there is strong political pressure on trusts to consider embracing the service. Many are being railroaded into toeing the political line rather than doing what is best for their individual business. As time goes on and there remains a lack of proven cost benefits among trusts using SBS, the greater the risk that it becomes consigned to the annals of history as yet another example of a failed government technology initiative.

Olympic winners back AGRESSO



Members of the successful London Olympics bid team have decided to back AGRESSO to ensure they stay ahead of their competitors.

Steer Davies Gleave, the independent transport consultancy, who formed part of the Olympic Transport Strategy team for the successful London 2012 bid is to switch to the AGRESSO Business World finance and information system ahead of a period of rapid growth for the firm.

In a contract worth £250,000, Steer Davies Gleave will replace its ageing Mondas accounting package and implement the core financials, project management suite, web timesheet and expenses modules of the fully integrated AGRESSO system.

The company was looking for a single business information system which offers powerful project management functionality to give its 400 consultants fast, easy, and remote access to accurate, real-time data from their bases in the UK, Europe, South America and Australia. They will use the project costing, billing, estimates and tracking modules as well as the project manager's toolbox. The AGRESSO system will also enable to submit timesheets and expenses via the web.

Stephen Crouch, finance director of Steer Davies Gleave, said: "Our consultants are sophisticated users who need to be able to interpret

and report on complex projects. What we hope the business will notice most from introducing AGRESSO is how quickly and easily they will be able to access, interrogate and present the information held in the system."

Agresso won the contract in a final head to head competition with Sun Accounts and Time at Work.

Crouch said: "Because we are likely to add to the system later, we felt a single integrated approach was a better option for us than a number of separate 'best of breed' packages.

"In addition, Agresso's experience with other professional services organisations will be very useful for us and it combined the right functionality with value for money."

The architecture of AGRESSO Business World has been designed specifically to meet the needs of 'people-centric' organisations such as Steer Davies Gleave in terms of its flexibility, its powerful reporting capabilities and the ease with which it can be updated to keep pace with business changes. Other Agresso professional services and project-based customers include Halcrow Group, Buro Happold, DTZ, NUKEM and WSP Group.

The system is scheduled to go live in early 2006.

Wigan scoop top financial prize



Congratulations to Wigan Borough Council's Director of Finance and IT Dr David Smith, whose just been named the best in the business.

Wigan's 'money man' was crowned the Local Government Chronicle's Finance Director of the Year during a glittering awards ceremony at London's Dorchester Hotel.

The hotly contested title proves Dr Smith's outstanding personal contribution to the authority and local government finances on a wider scale.

Dr Smith has been Wigan's Director of Finance and Information Technology for the past six years and has been instrumental in helping the authority to its 'excellent' status in the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). Auditors awarded Dr Smith's department full marks across the board during the assessment process for subjects such as: financial management; financial standing; standards of financial conduct and prevention of fraud and corruption.

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