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Kent recognises that getting more and more benefits from such a large, powerful system as AGRESSO relies on maintaining the momentum to explore and develop use of the system and share experience. Three internal user groups of support staff, budget managers and senior management meet on a rolling basis, one a month, to discuss any issues. They then report to the group meeting the following month to ensure buy-in at all levels.

Next

Sue Lock said: "We are exactly where we planned to be at this stage but now we want to use more of AGRESSO's functionality. We want to be able to give more pro-active support to managers and carry out more strategic work."

The next stage is to introduce full workflows as well as web invoice manager which will allow Kent to import invoices electronically as XML documents to take further advantage of AGRESSO's web technology. Other modules on Kent's 'wish list' are fixed assets and also officers' expenses which the finance team is confident could bring further major savings.

Longer term, the HR module is being examined as a way of realising even greater benefits from having an integrated system and a business case is being built for using project costing and billing to replace both the service's fleet and property management systems.

Flexible

Uniformed emergency services are complex, highly regulated, publicly accountable, 24x7 operations with their own specific business information requirements. The flexibility of Agresso's system means it is particularly well suited to 'people-centric' organisations such as police, fire and ambulance which need to measure performance, analyse and adapt on a regular basis.

Sue McGonigal summed up: "We love the system. Reaction has been so overwhelmingly positive that we take it personally if anyone is critical of AGRESSO, especially as the fault almost always lies with the user not the system. We are already seeing quantifiable and cultural benefits and are confident many more will emerge

as we exploit more of the system's capabilities."

Benefits

- › Reduction in administration work and duplication of data entry
- › Redeployment of people to take on more strategic meaningful tasks
- › Reduction in paper trail and processing costs
- › 98% of purchase invoices are now paid within 30 days
- › Tighter budgetary control and a reduction in maverick buying
- › Improved reporting
- › Accurate real time data more widely accessible
- › User friendly look and feel
- › As a self funding investment, the system will be paid for by 2008

Every day more public sector organisations are discovering the Agresso advantage

Organisations like Kent Fire and Rescue Service, House of Commons, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Essex Police, Greater Manchester Fire Authority and Gateshead and Northumbria Police Authority are using our information system to empower their people to perform more effectively.

For fast accurate information delivery with the ability to change with your organisation, AGRESSO Business World is the fully integrated business system for successful organisations.





AGRESSO Business World – turning information into an advantage

AGRESSO Business World includes Financials, Project Costing and Billing, Procurement, Human Resources, Payroll, Resource Planning and Information Management.

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Case Study Kent Fire and Rescue Service

You need an advantage...
...You need AGRASSO





Kent Fire &
Rescue Service

Agresso to the rescue



A year after implementing a new finance and business information system, the Kent Fire and Rescue Service is being managed more efficiently and is making significant savings, enough to have paid for the entire project by 2008.

The switch to AGRESSO Business World followed as a natural consequence from the local government reorganisation which established the Kent Fire and Rescue Service as a separate legal entity, rather than part of Kent County Council. An assessment of three private sector providers and two public sector partners proved there was a real business case for the fire service opting for its own independent system.

"The savings we can make from implementing AGRESSO will have covered all the costs of the system, the implementation and the consultancy within five years."

Service

Kent Fire and Rescue Service is one of the largest in the country. It has a budget of over £61 million and employs nearly 900 full-time and 650 part-time firefighters plus 220 support staff based across 65 fire stations, three divisional offices and a central headquarters. As a public sector body the service is subject to complex reporting requirements and has to enforce extremely strict budgetary controls. Overspending is not an option.

The fire service opted for AGRESSO Business World because of the system's flexibility, integrated functionality and its web capabilities. It was also a very cost effective solution, especially as it will become a self-funding investment.

Sue McGonigal, Head of Finance at Kent Fire and Rescue, said: "The savings we can make from implementing AGRESSO will have covered all the costs of the system, the implementation and the consultancy within five years."

Savings are being made from Kent Fire no longer paying to outsource elements of its financial management to Kent County Council and from economies already directly attributable to using the AGRESSO system. These stem primarily from the introduction of web requisitioning and from more efficient working practices.

Sue Lock, Kent Fire and Rescue Service's Principal Accountant, said: "One very obvious example has been that we completed our year end reporting inside a month, that's two thirds quicker than previously."

She continued: "Using AGRESSO has cut out a lot of administration work and duplicate data entry so we've been able to wholly or partly redeploy people to take on more strategic, meaningful tasks."

"One example of the savings from employing the e-business functionality within AGRESSO," she added "is that we can potentially save £100 a week just by e-mailing remittance advice notes for invoice payments by BACS rather than posting them."



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e-procurement

AGRESSO helps organisations become more efficient by encouraging them to streamline business processes and workflows at the configuration stage.

"Challenge everything" advises Sue McGonigal. "Take the opportunity from the outset to question every aspect of how your organisation works. Then mould your processes to ensure you get the best out of AGRESSO."



The clearest example of this for Kent Fire and Rescue has been the introduction of web requisitioning. "We could see the savings and efficiency gains that were possible from e-procurement and we were determined it was going to work" explained Sue Lock.

Doing so though meant far greater changes than simply handling requisitions electronically; it meant a huge cultural change which many people initially resisted. She conceded: "There were some serious debates and disagreements but we were adamant we were going to shift people's

attention away from invoices and onto the order as the most important step."

Kent's procurement processes now force budget managers to get involved at the order stage by logging on to AGRESSO to approve, commit and code expenditure. That though, said Sue Lock, should be the full extent of their involvement: "Provided that the prices on the order are accurate, then once the requisitioner has receipted a delivery on the system, the central finance team does all the remaining operations by matching the invoice to the order and making payment automatically by BACS."

As well as a much-reduced paper trail, the result has been that 98% of purchase invoices are now paid within 30 days. Processing costs are down because AGRESSO is able to consolidate multiple invoices from a supplier into a single monthly payment. Accurate commitment accounting is also helping to further tighten budgetary control.

In addition, maverick buying has been significantly reduced. "Web requisitioning forces best value because purchasers are directed to approved suppliers who offer the best discounts and already have contracts set up with us" Sue McGonigal pointed out. "Budget managers only have to ask two things – how much is it going to cost and can I afford it?"

AGRESSO forces discipline. Because the entire procurement process is handled electronically from within the system, the checks embedded in the workflows make it very difficult to bypass correct procedure.

A change is already evident in the way people are thinking about procurement. "When we first introduced web requisitioning most

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orders bore inaccurate prices or were raised after the invoice was received" said Sue McGonigal. "One year on, that's down to roughly 50%. You have to be tough and stick to your guns to see the full benefits."

Kent Fire's internal auditors have praised the new procurement practices and the finance team believes there are much greater savings to be made through, for example, the integration of purchasing and stores.

Reporting

Just as web requisitioning has simplified procedures, made budget managers more directly involved and introduced greater control, the AGRESSO system is having similar effects in other areas of finance.

One of the major successes for Kent is improved reporting. Accurate, real-time data is now much more widely accessible to the fire service's budget managers via web screens. No longer reliant on paper reports circulated by the central finance team, they can carry out their own enquiries and report in a format which is meaningful to them using templates tailored to their individual needs.

As Sue McGonigal said: "You can get the information out of AGRESSO. That may sound obvious but it's actually very difficult with a lot of finance systems. It also has a very user friendly look and feel to it which is one of the reasons we've had such excellent feedback from staff at all levels, including senior management and non-finance people."

Implementation

As well as praise for the system, the implementation itself has also been recognised as an exercise in successful project management. The service went live on budget, on time and to the original plan seven months after signing the contract.

Sue Lock acted as project manager and remarked: "Implementation was demanding. Agresso's knowledge transfer approach means their consultants support you but you map the processes, clean the data, configure, test and take the system live. It does though give you complete ownership of your system and the expertise to change and develop it as you want."

Strong decision making is critical to successful implementation and Kent Fire and Rescue instigated a weekly session dedicated to just that and created a temporary job specifically to support the process. To make sure everyone involved was fully aware of every decision, each meeting was documented and the action points, decision sheets and notes, with the options available and recommendations, were circulated in advance of the following week's meeting.

The highly successful implementation at Kent also owes a great deal to the sustained training programme it put in place for users from the outset. Live demonstrations were held to give an overview of AGRESSO as soon as the contract had been signed.

Six workstations were set up at central headquarters and full time training sessions held over an eight week period with 'handholding' support at go live. Follow up training was given a few weeks after the system was rolled out to each department. In addition, personal consultations are held where an individual needs specific help and telephone support is available throughout the week.

Kent Fire and Rescue Service technical information

- › Server Operating System = Windows 2000
- › Server architectures used to host RDBMS = Windows
- › RDBMS solutions = SQL Server
- › Client Operating System environments = XP/2000
- › Network Operating System = Windows 2000

