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PROJECT CHALLENGE

Running alongside Ad:tech on 21st. and 22nd. September was the UK's largest exhibition for project management professionals, Project Challenge, which had a strong IT presence, indicative of a major growth area for the electronics professional.

The 48 presentations were divided into four zones headed 'Software and Solutions', 'Case Studies and Expertise', 'Planning Planet', and 'Masterclass'. This was supplemented with an exhibition featuring just over 50 exhibitors.

In this the last issue of *The Electron* for 2011 some of the main features of this event are highlighted with reference to project management as an application area for the electronics professional.

I.T. PROJECT FAILURE AND HOW TO AVOID IT

A White Paper by Acando UK, a global consultancy providing project management services, presents an overview of some of the key reasons why I.T. projects fail, and offers some practical advice on how to avoid it.

In this paper author Phil Jacklin contends that I.T. projects do not need to fail and that failure does not have to be the "acceptable norm" that many people have come to expect.

The paper compares research by The Standish Group in 1995, which showed that 31.1 per cent of projects could expect to be cancelled before they were completed and 52.7 per cent would be over 180 per cent over their original budget, with research from The Chartered Institute for I.T. in 2004 that showed that 23.8 per cent of projects were cancelled before completion and 53 per cent were more than 70 per cent over budget. Further statistics are presented all of which show similar trends and the figures are described as "worrying". The author states:

"The trends show that the failure and overspend rates are not changing over time. This is despite billions spent on project management, many institutes developing improved techniques, and all the research into how to run projects well. After all the lessons learned from the innumerable failed projects, project failure rates are the same today as they were 15 years ago."

Part of the reasoning for the lack of improvement is attributed to the nature of the surveys themselves that "do not look at the root causes of failures". Lack of user input and lack of resources, for example, are not root cause reasons because often there are additional underlying reasons behind the failure, such as types of user not not clearly identified or project managers not submitting requests for resources in a timely manner.

The author then reduces the number of reasons why I.T. projects fail to just two root causes:

(i)   The choice of project manager

(ii)   Lack of executive sponsorship

It is argued that together an effective project manager and an effective executive sponsor will pull a project through to success irrespective of what the problems are:

"A good project manager would know if the executive sponsor wasn't committed to the project and would escalate that."

This being the case it follows that the key to a successful project has to be to put in place a top quality project manager who will:

- involve users

- make sure requirements are clear, unambiguous, complete and well-defined

- plan the project setting realistic expectations around delivery and set frequent project milestones

- ensure staff are competent (and change them if they are not)

- motivate the project team

- work with the executive sponsor to deliver a truly successful project

This means that those who do not want their projects to fail need to look very closely at the project manager.

In examining the factors that make a good project manager the author explains how some of the attributes required are not entirely obvious. It cannot, for example, be assumed that there is good correlation between project success rates, good project managers, and formal project management qualifications:

"To become a certified PRINCE 2 practitioner requires 2 days of formal learning in a classroom, an exam, another day of formal training and a second exam. It doesn't require any formal experience of project management, or any proof of your ability to apply the PRINCE 2 principles to a project either."

Thus, project management qualifications, when taken in isolation, cannot be taken as a good indicator of a good project manager because:

(i)   there is no check that the practitioner can apply the principles taught in the qualifications

(ii)   human interactions in a project can be a hindrance to the application of the principles

The unfortunate truth, according to Mr. Jacklin, is that those responsible for assigning project managers to a project often do not understand the in-depth principles of the profession either, and consequently are not well placed to ask the challenging questions, for example to see why requirements led design principles were not used in a project:

"A good project manager applies the principles carefully to each project, and where they don't they are able to show a considered, full and reasoned argument as to why not."

More information on this feature is available from Acando Limited UK, 7750 Daresbury Office Village, Daresbury Park, Cheshire WA4 4BS. Telephone: 01928 796800. Email: info@acando.uk

CASE STUDY: THE BT PPM METHOD

British Telecom has transformed its approach to programme and project management and professional development training so as to make internal business transformation and the design and build of new platforms, products and services faster, cheaper and more effective. At the heart of this transformation is the BT PPM Method, a new management approach that combines the best features of PRINCE 2, MSP and the new British Standard BS6079 Part 1: 2010.

BT employs over 90,000 people in 170 countries and there are hundreds of programmes and projects running simultaneously. Cross-company working is essential and no team can succeed by itself.

Until recently about 20 different approaches were used across the business and none of them matched, and so it was decided to create a single method in an innovative way, utilising the combined advantages of the above three methods. The new method has also been cross-referenced against APM and PMI qualifications sp that the mapping can be understood, and definitions clarified where in MSP and PRINCE 2 they are not entirely clear. AS time goes on more people acquire the new terms through exposure and familiarity.

The new method uses two sets of procedures:

(i)   Management procedures – referred to in BS6079 as integration activities, which detail all the activities needed to undertake a programme or programme part.

(ii)   Support procedures – relating to detailed guidance for undertaking a particular aspect of management called for in the management procedures.

These support procedures consist of control procedures, quality procedures and commercial procedures.

A working group was set up utilising people from every part of the business to review the materials prior to formal approval and publication:

'BT recently launched a template in SharePoint 2010 which can be used as the working area for a project or project team. As the BT PPM Method already existed, the requirements for this new capability were already in place, probably halving the development time.'

The method is role-driven and written entirely independently of BT's organisation structure. A clear distinction is made between 'directing' and 'managing' and the method can be tailored to suit individual circumstances:

'Each procedure includes guidelines to help decide on what form the tailoring can take. Also, each standard product description also has a section on tailoring, describing what may be changed in the associated template.'

People are encouraged to tailor, however, only when it adds value:

'If too much is changed, the induction costs for new staff to a programme will escalate and the programme manager will also be faced with ongoing maintenance costs for the "local" elements. They will also miss out on the continuous improvements relating to any standard procedures they have tailored from.'

The BT PPM Method covers a wide range of programme and project types as well as accommodating a wide range of skills, varying from the experienced manager who does not require everything to be spelt out, to the new recruit with little depth of understanding of the techniques. This wide range of coverage is enabled by presentation in three different formats (summary flow chart, pdf booklet and set of web pages) provided by an application from Business Optix:

'The tool made the development and maintenance of the method significantly simpler and cheaper than conventional approaches.'

The method is brought to the users via the web with the home page taking the form of a simple diagram from which each procedure can be accessed, with links to each procedure, roles and accountabilities, templates and guides. Every web page has a section at the bottom where users can log their feedback and improvement suggestions.

Training materials support the method and there are project frameworks or 'lifecycles' that bind together the management procedures for a project with the specialist procedures or processes relating to the type of outputs the project is creating:

'Lifecycles are the primary vehicle for managing project risk. BT has a standard lifecycle, based on the concepts in BS6079-1: 2010 (such as gates representing entry points to stages). This should be used if there isn't another mandated. Different projects have different needs and risk profiles, so they require different gates and stages and, in many cases, the method or process used for key deliverables may influence this. BT can build experience by tailoring lifecycles from the standard in undertaking these specific types of project, adding to our body of knowledge and improving our delivery record.'

Contributor: Robert Buttrick, Programme and Project Management Director, BT. Publication: *Project Management Today*, September 2011.

MICROSOFT PROJECT SERVER 2010: THE KEY FEATURES

Microsoft® Project Server 2010 is built on Microsoft SharePoint® Server 2010 and brings together powerful business collaboration platform services with structured execution capabilities to provide flexible work management solutions. Project Server 2010 unifies project and portfolio management to help organisations align resources and investments with strategic priorities, gain control across all types of work, and visualise performance by using powerful dashboards.

By combining top-down portfolio management techniques with bottom-up project management capabilities, Project Server 2010 helps organisations identify and select optimal portfolios. Project Server 2010 workflow capabilities help organisations define the right governance processes to effectively control all types of work – project and operational – throughout the work life cycle. There is also a new Proposal Status page, which helps the Project Management Office to effectively communicate the governance processes.

Project Server 2010 provides a one-stop-shopping demand management portal to help organisations streamline and standardise the initiation process for all types of work. Centralising project and operational activities provides organisations with visibility across all requests and in-flight initiatives so that it is easy to eliminate duplicate requests and quickly assess the impact on available resources.

The intuitive Cost Constraint Analysis view helps analysts to quickly model varying budget constraints and use a sophisticated optimisation algorithm to recommend the project portfolio that best aligns with the business strategy. The Efficient Frontier, Strategic Alignment and Compare Scenario views provide powerful insights that help executives identify trade-offs and evaluate and refine portfolio selection.

The new capacity planning capability in Project Server 2010 helps analysts proactively assess the impact of proposed portfolio on the resource pool, and model

scenarios to enhance utilisation across the planning horizon. The Resource Constraint Analysis view then provides a holistic portal to help organisations visualise resource shortfalls and underutilisation, adjust project start dates to better utilise available employees, and model headcount decisions to identify optimal hiring strategies.

With Project Server 2010 project managers can now use powerful diagnostic capabilities such as Change Highlighting and Multi-Level Undo without having first to open Project Professional 2010. Web-based scheduling also provides flexibility to quickly build simple and complex schedules online and conveniently edit the plan from any location over the Internet.

Time reporting capabilities have been enhanced in Project Server 2010 to provide a new Single Entry Mode to unify time and task status updates, and the web-based user interface for timesheet entry and task management has been standardised to facilitate learning and enhance user experience. Project Server 2010 also connects with Microsoft Exchange Server 2010 to ensure that team members can conveniently receive and update their project tasks in Microsoft Outlook® 2010 and Outlook Web App.

Project Server 2010 simplifies administration through an improved console that consolidates both project and portfolio management capabilities. New features such as User Delegation and Project Permissions reduce the burden on the administrator by empowering user action.

More information on this may be obtained from Queue Associates, 5 St. John's Lane, Farringdon, London EC1M 4BH. Telephone: 020 7549 1606. Email: egalata@queueassoc.com

WHITE PAPER: TRANSFORMING I.T. INTO A MANAGED SERVICE PROVIDER

James Ramsey, Principal Consultant for CA Technologies, and Helge Scheil, Senior Vice President, SolutionSales, EMEA for CA Technologies, have jointly co-authored a White Paper entitled 'Transforming I.T. into a Managed Service Provider', which explains how to manage the paradigm shift to new technology drivers such as cloud and mobility.

In their Executive Summary the authors explain how technology and business drivers such as cloud computing, virtualisation, mobility and business social networking are driving the increased 'consumerisation' of I.T. services. No longer are business users restricted to the internal I.T. organisation when it comes to procuring services. Managed Service Providers (MSPs) provide serious competition, and so the case is put for internal I.T. organisations to develop the capability to become MSPs themselves or else "face a future where at best I.T. becomes increasingly marginalized and at worst is seen as irrelevant by the rest of the business."

In their solution the authors advocate the application of Project and Portfolio Management (PPM) best practices to I.T. transformation planning and execution. They state:

"PPM brings greater control and insight into I.T. transformation initiatives, enabling CIOs to better determine how best to leverage new and existing technology platforms to deliver maximum business value. This will not only help to change the perception of I.T. from being seen as a cost centre to a hub of business information, but will bring the CIOs closer to their overall strategic goals of driving business innovation and leading business change."

Using a PPM solution CIOs are able to collate current and future strategic goals and benchmark performance on an ongoing basis, and the authors suggest the following example targets:

- Target server consolidation

- Adoption of cloud software services

- Number of data centres

- Number of vendors

- Projected cost savings

- Planned employee reductions

As a PPM solution manages both the planning and execution of the transformation programme in one place, it eradicates the need for multiple spreadsheets or databases to support the process. As a result stakeholders can see immediately any issues across the entire transformation portfolio and effectively manage the transformation by exception.

It is argued that only by adopting a portfolio approach can both I.T. and business stakeholders quickly and objectively compare and contrast key assets using the same benchmarks, in order to determine which assets to eliminate, modernise, migrate or maintain. As a result CIOs will be better placed to prioritise those transformation and migration activities that will deliver the greatest business value whilst also ensuring that they have the resources available to manage the transition.

Emphasis is placed on establishing management controls to manage the process of moving from the current I.T. state to the target I.T. state, and on managing the I.T. transformation as a cyclical iterative process that starts with a clear definition of strategy and goals, and has an inherent flexibility to easily adapt to the business environment e.g. changes to business priorities, resource capacity or deadlines.

The solution, CA Clarity PPM, is delivered either as a 'Software-as-a-Service' (SaaS) or as an on-premise solution. It is used by over 1,400 organisations including Debenhams, Grant Thornton, Robeco and Finansbank.

CA Clarity PPM is an integrated solution enabling the capture of ideas, collaboration with customers to scope requirements, determination of the right portfolio mix, delivery while using traditional and Agile development methods together, and holistic management of the Business Services portfolio..

The majority of the Global Fortune 500 rely on CA Technologies to manage their evolving I.T. ecosystems.

More information is available from CA Technologies, Ditton Park, Riding Court Road, Datchet, Berkshire SL3 9LL. Telephone: 01753 577 733. Also www.ca.com

CASE STUDY: CAMDEN PRIMARY CARE TRUST

Like much of the N.H.S., Camden Primary Care Trust is undergoing change in many different areas. New services are being introduced, there is a move toward a commissioner/supplier model and there is increasing demand for performance information. In order to meet these challenges an increasing number of programmes are being run across the organisation, and with this has come a need to address governance. Linda Stannard, Head of PMO for Camden Primary Care Trust stated:

"There was no central reporting function, which meant that there was no way of collating all the information on each project to analyse it and offer support. Projects were not being run in a generic way. There was no standard form of project management across the organisation. We recognised that we needed a central resource to undertake these functions and initiate central governance for the many diverse projects underway across the PCT."

Three important objectives were set for the proposed resource:

   (i)   That it should make certain that proposed projects and programmes have clearly defined business outcomes and are supported by a sound business case.

   (ii)   That it should make information available to those involved with the project to enable them to identify risk and make informed decisions.

   (iii)   That it should improve the PCT's ability to successfully run projects by training, supporting and mentoring project managers and sharing good practice.

Following a tendering process, Bestoutcome were selected to provide an electronically based solution in the form of PM3, a specialised project management software tool, which would provide improved governance across the entire portfolio of projects being undertaken by the PCT.

A Programme Office was set up in February 2008 and operating plan projects began in April:

"Together with Bestoutcome we wrote a project strategy for establishing a PMO, with a project plan which included establishing processes to drive the project forward, communication of our aims, and the roll-out of PM3 across the organisation, factoring in training staff in its effective use."

PM3 supports outcome-based project management and provides an oversight of around 120 current projects:

"Project Office staff can see where project managers are up to in terms of workstreams and milestones, and can determine how projects will link to similar projects in other areas. This overview allows us to pre-empt risks and offer advice and help those running the project."

PM3 can be set up to automatically send a monthly update to all project sponsors and to generate a high-level financial report. It is customisable such that it can be tailored to suit the organisation. The value management criteria, for example, have been adapted from their initial private sector application to the needs of the N.H.S. such as patient care, quality of service and value for money. Thus, N.H.S. knowledge has been used to tailor the software to fit N.H.S. needs:

"Being able to effectively monitor all of Camden's projects has obvious governance advantages. We are able to focus on gaining the desired outcomes across the board and we can use this central resource to avoid duplication of effort."

The new system has provided Camden PCT with a single way of approaching projects and programmes i.e. an improvement in standardisation and project delivery that is much improved.

Bestoutcome state:

'PM3 supports top-down outcome-driven planning enabling projects and programmes to be planned as a series of desired outcomes rather than a myriad of activities. Whether the programme is to implement a polysystem, provide improved levels of service on an existing pathway, or achieve significant cost savings from a series of individual project initiatives, PM3's planning approach ensures a focus on achieving the key milestones to deliver the desired organisational outcomes. Plans for different programmes can be linked so that dependencies between projects across the portfolio can be captured and tracked. Critical milestones in individual projects can be escalated allowing them to be more easily tracked at the programme level. Benefits can be tracked at project level and totalled across programmes allowing the actual and forecasted outcomes to be compared against target in, for example, a cost saving programme.'

More information is available from Bestoutcome Limited, 61 Orchehill Avenue, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire SL9 8QH. Telephone: 01753 893 511. Email: info@bestoutcome.com

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AUTOMATION

What has been described as 'the ultimate professional services automation software solution', the SharpOWL, has been launched by Europe's leading provider of software for professional services, IRIS Project Solutions.

Organisations that employ a significant number of skilled and expensive professional staff must account for their time and decide whether to charge clients or justify costs internally. Without accurate information on project status, billable hours and resource utilisation, the resulting loss of control will lead to dissatisfied clients and reduced profit margins.

The SharpOWL enables the collection of a wealth of information about client relationships, project performance, project profitability, resource skills and utilisation.

The Administration feature allows users to hold and use all the information relating to projects, clients, expense types and analysis codes that will be used to monitor and report on the project. It allows for:

- maintenance of client and project information

- maintenance of task and activity dictionaries

- configuration of analysis codes/measures to support business analysis and reporting

- capture and maintenance of organisation structure

- maintenance of calendars

- maintenance of resource databases including HR data such as skills and rates etc.

The Accounting feature handles the finance detail in a project, including currency, cost and resource issues that affect the project, allowing for:

- monitoring of progress against budget

- measurement of costs by resource and activity

- management of currency exchange rates

- comprehensive reporting of work-in-progress

- reporting on revenue and profitability by client, project and other measures

- reporting on resource utilisation and recovery

- recording of achievement against project tasks and key milestones

- communication of essential information regarding project status and performance

The Resource Manager enables resources to be monitored and scheduled in a real-time web-based environment using an extensive skills database and seamless integration with Microsoft Outlook. It allows for:

- maintenance of a database of resource skills, qualifications and attributes

- matching of skills with availability with reference to Microsoft Outlook calendars and SharpOWL project calendars

- management of booking requests

- understanding of resource constraints or over capacity

- forecasting of service revenues

- identification of recruitment and training needs

The Time and Expense Manager provides an easy-to-use intelligent web-based tool that promptly and efficiently records time and expense information. Inbuilt workflow provides a streamlined process for approval by managers and ensures that project costs are readily available for analysis and billing. It allows for:

- easy capture and full automation of time and expenses

- establishment of workflows for routing and approval of time and expenses

- feeding of billing and other applications

- entering of time and expenses in a web-based or off-line environment

- reduction of admin costs associated with heavy spreadsheet and paper-based systems

- elimination of revenue leakage

- monitoring of fee earning and non-fee earning activities

The Billing Manager provides a comprehensive solution for billing and recharging for services-based organisations, management of all potential billing scenarios and definition of multiple billing document layouts. It allows for:

- maintenance of rate schedules and project or client overrides

- establishment of billing schedules and milestones

- management of complex billing scenarios

- drafting and editing of invoices online

- management of write-offs, uplifts and incremental charges

- operation of a two-stage approval process

- shortening of the time-to-cash cycle

The Intra-Company Charging module complements the Billing Manager for organisations that share resources across multiple locations or profit centres. It uses profit centre logic to allow each office, company, department or region to have its own rules for charge rates, resource cost rates and margins:

'All employees or resources are assigned to a specific profit centre and their intra-company transfer rate established. Intra-Company Charging automatically ensures the correct allocation of cost, revenue and profit when an employee or resource is deployed on a project on behalf of another profit centre.'

Embedded use of Microsoft Reporting Services and the Vision Suite enables reporting, business intelligence and analytics capability and there is a fully detailed database 'schema' that allows users to adopt their own reporting strategy based upon other widely available business reporting tools.

A customisable 'alert' management tool automates the delivery of event driven email alerts to managers and the Budget Manager links to Microsoft Excel allowing for:

- creation of new budgets and amendment of existing ones

- monitoring of changes to budget and forecasting over the product lifecycle

- forecasting of costs and fees

- enhancement of cash flow management

- extraction of data from reports for subsequent input directly into spreadsheets

There is full revenue recognition functionality that allows the organisation to build in any revenue recognition rules and apply them to projects. The software will generate revenue postings based on the organisation's rule set, as well as allowing revenue adjustments to be made based on current knowledge of any project status. Contingencies can be allowed for with the revenue only being taken once the agreed stage has been reached.

More information is available from IRIS Project Solutions, Unit 1, Gordon Mews, Gordon Close, Portslade, East Sussex BN41 1HT. Telephone: 0844 8155 710. Email: www.iris.co.uk/sharpowl

PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLATFORM FOR PROGRAMME MANAGERS AND PROJECT LEADERS

The first project management platform designed and built specifically for programme managers and project leaders has been launched by Deltek, a global provider of enterprise software and information solutions for professional services firms and government contractors.

Their product, the Deltek PM Compass, unlike other solutions, acts as a 'centralised command centre' where users can monitor and control complex, inter-related projects from one easy-to-use dashboard. It provides a singular view into complex, multi-tiered projects whilst simultaneously delivering all of the tools required for the management of programmes from a centralised platform, so empowering all levels of an organisation to increase visibility and project controls.

The role-based interactive dashboard is designed to prevent project teams from suffering from the unwanted surprises that can result from a lack of visibility, process inconsistency and untrustworthy data. This simplifies root cause analysis and identifies time-wasting costly issues so that they can be remedied quickly. The dashboard:

- delivers controlled and safe direct interaction with underlying tools of record

- eliminates inconsistent data

- removes the need for tedious error-prone manual processes

- enables effective reporting processes

- increases real-time applicability of information

- enforces individual ownership and accountability

- ensures adherence to workflow standards

- allows users to take action quickly and proactively

- reveals data without burying it in reports, so eliminating costly data integration, lost time and poor decision making

Deltek state:

'PM Compass will embrace an organisation's current processes and deliver a new level of project visibility and management. As Deltek's latest addition to its Enterprise Project Management portfolio, PM Compass makes struggling to maintain consistency and predictability in project processes a thing of the past.'

Deltek may be contacted on 020 7518 5010 or 020 8843 7000. Email: info@deltek.com

CASE STUDY: LASTMINUTE.COM

Lastminute.com was launched in October 1998 and is now the most popular travel and leisure website in the UK with around 2.5 million visitors each week. The company is part of the Sabre Network, which also includes Travelocity, Travelocity Business, HolidayAutos.co.uk, HolidayHotels.co.uk and All Hotels. As a global lifestyle and travel business lastminute.com employs over 1,900 staff and is recognised as one of the most successful online travel brands globally.

The UK division of lastminute.com is the largest retailer of West End tickets, selling over 1.5 million theatre tickets every year. In addition lastminute.com markets rooms from over 80,000 hotels and flights from over 300 airlines worldwide.

As the company has expanded through growth and acquisition its technology infrastructure has become complex and diverse as different I.T. processes and systems have been integrated into the lastminute.com enterprise. This led to the business having over 2,500 servers spread across Europe with numerous I.T. technicians and developers in eight countries and multiple project reporting systems in use.

The diverse nature of the technology infrastructure and systems processes meant that integration between I.T. systems and departments presented a challenge. Accountability was also widely spread with key systems located in different geographical areas each managed by a different I.T. manager, making it difficult to pinpoint specific areas of responsibility within the I.T. team. In addition several separate international maintenance agreements existed with a multitude of different technology vendors.

In 2009 an end-to-end collaborative project and portfolio environment was introduced consisting of Microsoft Project Professional, Project Server, Project Web Access, SharePoint and EPM Office. As part of a complete transformation programme (codenamed Z-ETA, deriving from a combination of Zen and the art of EMEA Technology Abilities), this new introduction enabled numerous projects to be more effectively managed throughout the project lifecycle from strategy definition, prioritisation, selection and project execution to benefit realisation.

Fin Goulding, CIO for lastminute.com, explained:

"The immediate benefits following the implementation were around existing project visibility. With a complete project management system in place we were able to fully understand exactly what projects had been started, where they were based and run from, the resources that were deployed and the progress that had been made."

Metrics were both financially and team oriented and based on the projects budget, the anticipated return-on-investment, whether the location and skills sets assigned to the project were appropriate, and the project timeline. A system of dashboards and monthly reports were introduced throughout the project lifecycle, which helped to reduce the complexity of existing projects.

By centralising all of the change initiatives of the business it has become possible for lastminute.com to prioritise existing and future projects based on the business objectives given to the I.T. department by the Business Leadership Team. By bringing all of the project management resources together and understanding the existing project commitments, planning has been improved by measuring the effectiveness of completed projects; where, how and with whom to resource the development of new services; and prioritisation of the replacement of legacy systems.

In looking to the future, Fin Goulding states:

"Integrating with our Agile software development toolset is another highly important area as we link the time recorded in our Agile development software (VersionOne) into Project Server to provide a complete resource management solution. The need for a collaborative and holistic toolset to support these transformation efforts has been crucial and will continue to allow us to have the right resources working on the right projects in the right place."

More information on this feature may be obtained from Corporate Project Solutions, Regal House, 4 Station Road, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 1NZ. Telephone: 01628 895 600. Email: solutions@cps.co.uk

UNIQUE PROFESSIONAL MIND MAPPING SOFTWARE

A unique professional Mind Mapping software application, MindView 4 Business, has been developed by MatchWare Inc., a leading provider of multimedia, screen recording and visual thinking software that enhances individuals' ability to create, visualise, manage and distribute information.

The product allows Mind Mapping to be used to help members of teams to understand projects, contribute to planning, follow project timelines and clearly visualise all tasks in an organised manner. It bridges the gap between Mind Mapping and project planning by integrating a dynamic Gantt Chart.

With the product users can brainstorm and visualise ideas quickly and easily, whilst the Shared Workspace takes collaboration to another level by offering true multi-user editing, distribution of tasks and monitoring of task status.

A simple click of the mouse allows for generation of clearly outlined text documents, professional presentations, comprehensive HTML sites and interactive timelines. Export to Word is facilitated by exclusive templates, as is export to PowerPoint and Excel. There is also a calculation feature that allows users to associate numbers with each Mind Map branch so as to calculate costs, sales figures and profits. MindView files can be uploaded directly through a desktop application to the Shared Workspace so that it can be shared with other account owners.

For more details contact MatchWare Limited, 9-11 The Quadrant, Richmond TW9 1BP. Telephone: 020 8940 9700. Email: london@matchware.com

CASE STUDY: THAMES WATER

Thames Water is the UK's largest water and wastewater company. Every day it supplies 2,600 million litres of tap water to 8.8 million customers across London and the Thames Valley, and works with a large number of external contractors to deliver its £1 billion per annum capital programme.

Thames Water handles significant volumes of information in the form of contract documents, design files, and general correspondence pertaining to around 500 live projects. Each party is responsible for a specific element of a project and for keeping related documentation and activities up to date. Ensuring that this information is accurate and current is essential to the decision making processes that are involved in a project, irrespective of complexity. Paul Meredith, Business Compliance Manager for Thames Water explained:

"Our projects involve a number of internal and external parties, which can be complex from an information gathering and processing perspective. As a result we were finding it increasingly difficult and time consuming to get clarity around the status of documents and activities associated with our projects. In addition, we need to ensure compliance with certain standards, which is problematic if you don't have insight into the various stages of the project lifecycle or the documentation associated with each stage. The resultant delays and uncertainty are costly when you need to account for every penny spent on a project and we needed to improve our systems and processes."

In response to these challenges Thames Water sought a cloud-based solution that would improve transparency and compliance with regard to project, document and activity management.

The chosen solution was BC Assure, a simple but highly effective tool that operates at project level from inception through to completion, mitigating the risk of failure by providing confidence that the project continues to meet requirements at every stage of its lifecycle.

The product enables Thames Water project teams to collect proof of compliance and progress and gain clear visibility of the project status irrespective of how many teams are working on the initiative or their locations.

The documents and activities in a project are all given a red, amber or green flag to denote where they are in the business management process and are laid out in a grid style format, which ensures that everyone associated with the project has clear insight into what steps have been, or need to be, taken. The traffic light flags change status automatically and are visible to everyone working on the project. This simplicity has ensured a high degree of user acceptance and uptake of the solution. Mr. Meredith commented:

"At any one time up to three thousand authorised users can have access to the project information held in BC Assure and because it is a cloud-based solution it is available at any time, in any location and from any web-enabled device. The time saved in searching for documents is impressive and ensures we can spend more time managing our projects and the contents of the documents rather than searching for, and establishing, the status of documents."

Monthly status reports can now be produced in around 30 minutes, a vast improvement on the old system, and an achievement considering that there may be over 490 projects in play at any one time. Demonstration of legal compliance is also simpler with ease of extraction of tagged documents and delivery to the relevant authorities.

BC Assure is configurable so that changes can be made to the system by Thames Water without the need for external consultants. Mr. Meredith concludes:

"BC Assure can handle as many steps and stages of a project as we need and this helps us to cope with any project of any size or complexity using a consistent approach."

Information on the above feature is available from Unit 4 Collaboration Software Limited, 9th. Floor, Reading Bridge House, George Street, Reading, Berkshire RG1 8LS. Telephone: 01189 028 500. Email: collaboration@unit4.com

PLANVIEW ENTERPRISE 10.3

Planview Enterprise is being increasingly used for portfolio management across entire organisations rather than just in their I.T. departments. Enterprise-wide adoption from the finance department downwards, as opposed to the more traditional PMO upwards, is becoming more common.

It is a highly configurable application, which has undergone several changes in response to the above changed usage patterns. One of these is the incorporation of a new analytics and reporting portal, which pulls all dashboards, and analytical and reporting capabilities, into one place. This means that OLAP, real-time and relational data can now be displayed on a single dashboard. A set of dashboards can be created, each illustrating a different business aspect of the portfolio. All dashboards have a drill-down functionality and drag and drop customisation and configuration capabilities. Data can also be exported to RSS feeds, PowerPoint, Word, pdf, Excel. HTML and XML files.

Another new feature is a redesign of the Gantt Chart using Microsoft Silverline technology, improving its usability, performance and scalability. It can now load three times faster and can handle projects up to seven times larger than the previous version.

Task dates and durations can now be set using drag and drop techniques. Dependencies are still displayed but must still be entered manually.

Planview Enterprise's support for MS Project has been re-engineered with a toolbar now appearing in MS Project that allows data to be pulled from, and put back into, Planview Enterprise without having to open it:

'The old MS Project system allowed you to check out an MPP file and then check it back in again. This can still be done, but the new toolbar allows you to open the Planview Enterprise project within MS Project. Any existing resource assignments in Planview Enterprise are brought across, and you can add resources, either by name or by role, from the Planview Enterprise database, whilst in MS Project.'

The Operational Capacity Planning functionality has been enhanced and now incorporates scenario planning and modelling. With the aid of a screen showing the organisation's committed and pending (pipeline) projects it is possible to view the effect bringing a new project into a committed set of projects will have on resource capacity. A list of resources can be displayed and any overload(s) created by the new project will appear:

'Drilling into the line illustrating an overloaded resource, you can see which projects this resource is working on and exactly which projects are affected by the work overload. You can then model shifts in the dates of the work to see if the overload can be levelled. You can also try moving resources, using spare capacity from other areas.'

The Resource Assignment Manager has been reconstructed using Microsoft Silverlight technology such that it can now handle 33 times larger portfolios and is thirty times faster loading.

The Product Roadmap Gantt Chart, where release management information comes together, has been enhanced such that project activity information, down to its lowest level, can now be shown below each project bar. Also, it is now possible to group products by any product attribute.

A new 'Sustainability Portfolio' aspect has been added to the Planview Enterprise 'Brand Impact' functionality. Built in partnership with Strategic Harmony Partners, the Brand Impact function analyses what changes the project may cause to brand perception in terms of competitive impact, and the sustainability element introduces a 'green issues' factor that allows the impact of the project to be analysed against issues such as energy and water conservation and the minimisation of greenhouse gas emission.

Workflows have been introduced to manage the handling of changes, risks and issues:

'Once you've entered the details of the change (risk or issue), the workflow path kicks in to obtain any additional information that the organisation deems necessary. Priorities and impacts can be set and the route through the workflow based on these criteria.'

Several new processes have been added to the Planview Enterprise Process Builder, providing enterprise-wide processes for deliverables management, financial planning and SharePoint management.

Support for iPhones, Androids, and newer Blackberries is available and workflow steps and resource assignments can be approved on the phone. An iPhone app has also been added to support PlanviewPRISMS.com, an open forum in which individual customers can own private areas into which they can place their own best practice material and 'enablement paths':

'The best practice guidance in PRISMS is the sum of twenty years' experience from Planview and its customers. Its advice and templates therefore contain elements of PRINCE 2, SIGMA and other recognised methodologies, but it doesn't follow any recognised methodology to the letter.'

Planview Enterprise 10.3 is priced at £55,000 to £100,000 for a 200-user on premise system.

Planview Enterprise 10.3 is reviewed by Steve Cotterell as Software Review 214 in the June 2011 issue of *Project Manager*.

More information is available from Planview UK Limited, 400 Thames Valley Park Drive, Reading, Berkshire RG6 1PT. Telephone: 01189 637 731. Email: info@Planview.com

PROJECT MANAGEMENT GUIDES FOR I.T. PROFESSIONALS

A set of project management guides that provide a practical tool for using the PRINCE 2 Project Management Methodology for projects across an organisation has been published by SPOCE Project Management Limited.

Within each project level the guides provide step-by-step advice on what should be undertaken to help ensure that successful project management is applied in accordance with what is expected by the organisation. They are supported with template documents and a Techniques section so that as the understanding and maturity of project management increases, the guides can be modified and developed.

There are five guides in all, designed to explain how the project environment works. The system is based on establishing at least two levels of project (Possibly three if required), with the criteria for the levels of project being based on factors such as time, cost, project nature, and resource experience. Clear definition of these criteria will facilitate clear guidance on the level of controls that are required for each project.

The guides may be purchased as a standalone tool or as part of an implementation.

SPOCE state:

'To assist the use of project management within an organisation, SPOCE can review your organisation's current processes, tools and techniques and integrate these into the PRINCE 2 environment. While emphasis is placed on the PRINCE 2 standards, existing practices are used as guidance. It is important not to lose existing practice as this is often build up from a number of years, incorporating many lessons.'

Further details may be obtained from SPOCE Project Management Limited, West Wing, Briggs House, 26 Commercial Road, Poole, Dorset BH14 0JR. Telephone: 01202 736 373. Email: info@spoce.com

PROJECT CHALLENGE SPRING SHOW

The Project Challenge Spring Show is scheduled to take place at London Olympia on 28th. and 29th. March 2012. More information about this and the event as a whole may be obtained from Management Events Limited, P.O. Box 351, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 9YY. Telephone: 01256 762 460. Email: info@projchallenge.com

THE INSTITUTION OF ELECTRONICS WISHES ALL

MEMBERS A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A

HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR 2012