



Case study: Lancaster University

Information systems services uses Powerproject suite to fulfill department's capacity management needs



Jonathan Day, ISS Project Manager, explained: "ISS needed to be able to deliver new services in response to ever-changing requirements, but with most of our available resource already tied up we needed a way of understanding exactly where priorities were most needed. Employing capacity management techniques to understand future demand and our capability to deliver was important to enable decisions to be made based on reliable evidence. We also needed a way of understanding the demands on teams and individuals. These issues conspired to make us take a second look at Powerproject and in doing so we found it could help with the development of our processes."

The software was intended to help manage resources for service delivery and projects. "The main thing was to decide and understand exactly what the requirement was, and how to execute the process. Powerproject is a powerful tool; we recognised the need to identify what the roles were to support the process and to focus on just the functionality that would help individuals fulfil those roles by helping them complete the necessary tasks – this was the approach we took."

Elecosoft helped tailor the process to meet our needs

Elecosoft was called upon at the design stage of the project to understand the process to be replicated in the software. Elecosoft worked with the team to understand where they wanted to be.

It devised the bespoke training and implemented a pilot that ISS rolled out in phases, department by department. The project began 18 months ago and has recently been completed. "Elecosoft carried out onsite training on the planning part of the software, although we did run some of the time sheet training ourselves. It trained about 10-12 people at a time and I'm pleased to report that the staff, although nervous to begin with, found that the training exceeded their expectations. The course was tailored to fit the process we had in mind."

The department is now using Elecosoft's planning software as a desktop application, and its web-based system for recording time and progress in its Time Sheets. "We are doing a lot of development, system support, rolling out, training, and servicing of existing systems, and the software is helping us to cope with the expectations placed on us to deliver even more."

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The Information Systems Services (ISS) department within Lancaster University provides IT systems, services and facilities centrally for the university. These include the campus IT network, email, central IT systems, software, PC labs and, increasingly, access to IT facilities for a range of off-campus locations including foreign partner institutions. Of course training and support for using IT systems is also a vital component of the services offered. ISS is made up of a range of groups, each responsible for the coordinated delivery of the wide-ranging elements of the overall provision. One of these groups, Corporate Information Systems, delivers many of the administrative solutions for the university, and was the first group to implement the Powerproject suite project and programme management tool to help manage resourcing challenges.

The IT systems and services required to support such a large organisation are numerous and complex. It is an ongoing challenge for ISS to meet the growing provision needs. The department is already using significant resource levels to maintain the existing services; in order to help maximise available capacity for the growing project demands the department decided to introduce a professional project planning and management tool. Powerproject had been introduced a few years earlier, but was never fully rolled out and utilised effectively.

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Planning for the full portfolio

While it is still early days since Powerproject suite was implemented, Jonathan and the team can already see certain benefits.

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“It is always a bit of a challenge to be able to understand all of the services and the projects that ISS offers and delivers, we now have a way to show what all of our commitments are up to 2016. The data from the software can be used to populate useful reports showing all commitments which are easily identifiable in a graph, depicting projects in blue and services in green. Our available capacity can easily be identified and it enables more realistic priorities to be set.”

For Jonathan it was important to have a vision: “To get the most out of your software you have to invest time and understand what you want

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to achieve. We needed to be sure that individuals saw the implementation as a higher-level approach support us and make it work for us to managing and understanding our resource commitments. We wanted to ensure that this new system was not seen as an intrusive way of micro-managing tasks and individuals but as a way of capturing data about our general availability and commitments to key activities. Using Powerproject’s Time Sheets, we have the flexibility to allow the operative autonomy in managing their day-to-day tasks, while still giving us a clear indication of the resource commitment to a particular resource or service.”

Flexible licencing and quality support

ISS has 110 Time Sheet licences and 11 software user licences – but in effect this operates as more, having opted to use Elecosoft’s multi-user licencing option. Explained Jonathan:

“Using concurrent licencing works for us – it means that with fewer licences more people can access the system. Multi-user access is fundamental to our business, the very nature of what we do is reliant on a shared capability to plan, manage, deliver and report, otherwise we would have unconnected plans.”

Rollout of the software has only recently been completed, but some future benefits are already becoming apparent: “The software is providing insight into bottlenecks and helping us understand why things sometimes take so long. Our hope is that it will enhance the way the business and IT work together; we can see a great deal of potential in the months and years to come.”

Alongside the flexibility of its offering, Jonathan was impressed with Elecosoft’s support: “We have a real sense that Elecosoft is keen to support us and make it work for us, going beyond the spirit of the contract in many cases.”

About Lancaster University

Lancaster University has over 12,000 students and more than 2,500 members of staff and is internationally known as a centre for excellence in both teaching and research. Now approaching its 50th year, Lancaster University is a world-class centre for teaching and research. Information Systems Services provides a range of IT services and facilities. These include the campus IT network with access to the Internet, email and central IT systems; support and training for using IT systems and software; and access to IT facilities in PC Labs and other campus locations.

For more information visit:
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Powerproject: The power behind successful projects