

Case Study

GRIMSHAW



Background

Grimshaw is an internationally renowned architectural practice with offices in London, Melbourne, Sydney and New York. Employing 350 people worldwide, the company has an extensive portfolio of prestigious schemes including the Eden Project, Zurich Airport and Southern Cross Station in Melbourne. Grimshaw offers architecture, planning and industrial design services.

Problem

An increase in workload brought about an explosion in the growth of project information, presenting a host of issues associated with information management and collaboration. Duplicated and disparate data spread across multiple systems, high maintenance costs for existing databases and difficulty sharing information across offices on four continents were all affecting the practice's competitiveness. Keeping on top of version control, and retrieving archived information, was increasingly time consuming and the financial cost of this inefficiency was starting to stack up. Gaining and keeping quality accreditations such as ISO9001 was a key driving force behind constantly improving and refining the way quality was dealt with across the practice as a whole.

Furthermore, major clients were increasingly looking for reassurance that Grimshaw could handle huge volumes of information. With all this combined, a team at Grimshaw set about investigating what the leading knowledge management systems had to offer.

Solution

The search was for an industry standard, web-based and customisable system that would serve as both an intranet and extranet, which led Grimshaw to Union Square for AEC Professionals.

Union Square offers an integrated approach to the management of documents, projects, contacts and enquiries. Designed specifically for AEC professionals, the system provides transparency

Company

Grimshaw

Business

Architect

Number of staff

350

Solution

Union Square for AEC Professionals

"Duplication of data across multiple systems, high maintenance costs for existing databases and difficulty sharing data with offices abroad were all affecting our competitiveness."

UNION SQUARE
FOR AEC PROFESSIONALS

of practice operations and improves management control across all activities. Amongst the cross functional team appointed to select the new system there was a unanimous decision that Union Square was the best option for Grimshaw.

Once the core system was up and running Grimshaw focused on other areas where Union Square could address inefficiencies. A major benefit has been the issuing of drawings and controlled documents. This has led to improved efficiency on every project and means that transmittal notes and drawing registers can be created automatically, establishing a standard workflow process for this key activity. Grimshaw introduced the email vault, as well as the timesheets and leave management function which linked to the practice's finance system.



Implementation

Grimshaw started using Union Square on all new projects in the London office. This phased approach introduced users to the system gradually and, once established in the UK, the system was rolled out to Grimshaw's global offices, providing worldwide access to the central pool of information.

Internal communication was key to raising awareness and "selling" the system's benefits across the business. Training sessions were held and refresher sessions put in place to ensure everyone was fully up to speed on how the system operates.

Benefits

The key benefits Grimshaw has realised since implementing Union Square have been:

- **Saved time** – searching for documents, emails, drawings and archived data is much quicker now everything is electronic and processes are more streamlined across the business.
- **Saved money** – time previously wasted on laborious administrative tasks can be channelled into fee earning work. Printing and storage costs are also cut down thanks to the shift to electronic archiving.
- **Improved accuracy** – with the latest versions of documents clearly identified, and all older versions automatically superseded, there's an assurance that the correct information is being accessed and referenced on projects.
- **Enabled compliance** – the Union Square mail vault has been invaluable in ensuring that, should it need to, the practice can retrieve any email sent or received by anyone in the business regardless of what the individual has done with the email.
- **Centralised core business functions** – with all the main business processes integrated into one central system tasks like leave booking, document approval, invoice sign off and drawing issue are simple to manage and audit.

A Q&A with Claire Ball, IT Consultant

How have things moved on since the initial Union Square implementation?

The system is now used globally by all Grimshaw branches and the Drawing Management functionality has been a huge success. We also have global support processes running in all locations.



Has Union Square helped growth or added value?

Definitely. The knowledge management side has been the biggest benefit with everyone having access to the same information in the same way. Information and data capture is invaluable on large projects, which can run for years, where employees can come and go. Since implementing Union Square we've gained ISO accreditation and won a number of industry awards which we feel the system has been instrumental in.

Did you face any challenges?

The biggest was a political challenge – getting users to use it. Changing the way people work is really difficult even if they can see the benefits. When we turned off all the old systems and the ability to save files elsewhere we saw a spike in use.

Are there any new ways of working?

The basket functionality proves to be popular as employees can easily access documents relevant to their current project.

"The practice wanted a product which would support the current way of working rather than try to change it."

Contact us for more information on all our product offerings and how we can help transform your approach.

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