Case Study

VolkerWessels UK

Background

VolkerWessels UK is a well-respected, multi-disciplinary civil engineering and construction contractor working across a wide range of sectors including rail and highway infrastructure, flood protection/marine engineering and civil engineering.

Problem

The six separate business units within VolkerWessels UK had each developed an independent IT system. These functioned well but lacked integration, which was at conflict with the business's desire to provide a common platform. With multiple storage locations for documents and emails the retrieval of project information was a time consuming task. The business felt that a more joined-up approach would benefit all departments and reduce the need to support multiple types of software, whilst also improving document traceability. Managing large projects means there are significant periods of time when substantial volumes of data and documents are required on site. A system that could follow the project support the entire project lifecycle, from bid through to site and handover, was required.

Solution

VolkerWessels UK wanted more than just a document management system; it needed a system which would deliver added value by integrating the business and enabling collaborative working across the supply chain. The business reviewed a number of solutions including Microsoft SharePoint, which was not viable due to the amount of development work required to get it in a state fit for purpose.

VolkerWessels UK found its solution in Union Square for Construction. The business liked the sophisticated document management functionality that Union Square offers, combined with the ability to develop the software in-house and integrate with other third party systems.

Company
VolkerWessels UK

Business
Multi-Disciplinary Contractor

Number of staff
2000

Solution
Union Square for Construction

"With multiple storage locations for documents and emails the retrieval of project information was a time consuming task."

UNION SQUARE
FOR CONSTRUCTION

The system would also act as an extranet for the business, allowing information to be shared externally with project teams and removing the need to rent space with third party project extranet providers.

Implementation

The implementation was designed to coincide with a move to VolkerWessels UK's new premises, which enforced a tight deadline for the initial rollout. The Union Square team provided support and guidance throughout the entire process to keep things on track. A solid user training programme was a key priority for the business and, as well as utilising the Union Square training resources, VolkerWessels UK appointed an internal Head Trainer who developed a suite of training material. In total 850 members of staff received a half day training course over a six week period.

Communication was also key to the implementation process and users were kept informed of developments on a weekly basis. They were made aware of what was happening, how this would affect their role and what they should be doing in preparation. Supporting emails from the Managing Director helped to get people on board with this new way of working. VolkerWessels UK also developed a 'help zone' within the system to help solve any user problems as they occurred.

Benefits

The business is realising numerous benefits from Union Square, including:

- **One single view of business information** – contact details, project documents, emails, staff holiday and much more can all be viewed in a single system, making it quick and easy to find relevant information.

- **Integrated management processes** – many business processes are delivered through the Union Square Portal interface, including quality management and tendering, ensuring consistency and promoting use of the system.

- **Collaborative approach to project work** – VolkerWessels UK fully utilises Union Square's extranet capability opening up relevant areas of the system to sub-contractors and other members of the supply chain. This makes sharing project information simple, speedy and accurate.

A Q&A with Melanie Nurse, Chief Technology Officer

Has Union Square helped growth or added value?
It's allowed us to be more joined up; we can now work collaboratively between various offices and departments. Our disparate data issues have been removed.

How have things moved on since the initial implementation?
We've introduced various additional modules and done a lot of bespoke development to the system too. Tasks such as performance ratings, print requests, campaigns for IT training, leave and sickness and work package submissions are all managed through Union Square.

What challenges did you face along the way?
We knew it would be a somewhat painful change process. Changing the way 2,000 people work across five offices and multiple sites was quite a tall order and we knew the longer we left it the more difficult it would become. There's an on-going challenge to keep people up to date as the system is an evolving tool; people come and go and we have a lot of users. It can also be difficult to get everyone using the system properly; some users are advocates but others are more resistant. We've displayed other systems through Union Square interface to encourage further uptake.

Where are you planning to go in future with the system?
The system's functionality is always developing. We're looking at drawing management control to keep in-line with BIM developments, as well as further rollout across other areas of the business. There is also further integration work planned as well as looking into Workflow functionality.

" The business liked the sophisticated document management functionality that Union Square offers."

Your knowledge. Together.

UNION SQUARE
FOR CONSTRUCTION