Case study: Beard

Beard switches to Asta Powerproject for cost effectiveness and better functionality

For over one-hundred years award-winning Beard has been providing innovative solutions to complex construction projects, delivering high-quality design and build, new build, restoration and refurbishment work across all industry sectors.

Beard prides itself on its combined modern management techniques, effective teamwork, strong leadership and traditional craft skills which bring customers prompt and faultless delivery on projects of any size.

Background

Going from strength to strength, Beard is running, managing and tracking up to 45 major construction projects at once and has recently seen a surge in new staff appointments. Historically using MS Project to manage its construction projects, a massive rise in employee numbers has meant a dramatic increase in the software user base and hence in number of licences. Beard soon identified a cost risk associated with continuing to use its project management software and switched to Asta Powerproject for cost effectiveness and better functionality.

Teresa Braithwaite is Business Systems Manager at Beard. “MS Project was becoming very expensive,” she explained. “We switched to Asta Powerproject not only because it would give us better functionality but because it would be far more cost effective. Working within a Terminal Server environment we already employed the more expensive version of MS Project, plus we had to buy new upgrades each time they were released. As we were growing our user base very substantially from 100 to 200 we were going to need a lot more licences and we were going to have to spend a lot of money maintaining them and replacing them when new versions came along. Unlike Asta Powerproject, the licences, the upgrades and the new versions are not included in the package. The price with MSP was therefore going to go up and up. Having no surprise bills

About Beard

Beard is an award-winning construction company with a reputation for excellence in construction throughout the South of England. It delivers quality design and build, new build, restoration and refurbishment work from £50,000 up to £10 million, as well as providing turn-key maintenance services for smaller projects from a few hundred pounds upwards. It operates out of offices in Oxford, Swindon and Guildford and provides construction solutions across all market sectors. The company’s values of 'Friendly, Efficient and Committed' have developed over a hundred years, and are key to its long-term relationships with customers, consultants, partners and employees.

For more about Beard please visit: www.beard-construction.co.uk
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for upgrades was very attractive with Elecosoft, as was the flexibility of the licensing options. Given that our users might only need the software for a small percentage of their working week, it didn’t make sense for each individual to have a licence, but there is no option with MS Project. Because Elecosoft’s licensing is concurrent, we could have less licences but the same amount of people using them – so it made perfect sense to switch to Asta Powerproject.”

Teresa believes the best way to implement a new system successfully is to make sure everyone is on board with it from the start. As soon as they realised that their current software option was becoming financially prohibitive, they sought something that would do the same job, only better and cheaper. A new employee had been using Asta Powerproject and provided a demo. “We wanted to be sure the operations people were as happy with the choice of software as IT. Especially since we use it in a very different way from them. We sat our operations teams around the table and had a group discussion about the way forward. We got to understand their needs and we addressed those first. We had to make sure the software we chose would tick all the right boxes for them. They saw the demo and were instrumental in choosing Asta Powerproject too – after all they are the user group. We looked at other software too, and researched thoroughly, because we didn’t want to make a choice we would regret.

down the line. Asta Powerproject is compatible with our architects and what other people in our industry are using, so right from the start everyone felt it was the best choice to help improve the way we work.”

Elecosoft provided excellent tailored training

The next step was to organise a series of training workshops at Elecosoft’s offices for the site managers and constructions managers. Teresa also attended with aspirations to use the software for IT, having previously managed with spreadsheets.

Said Teresa: “The training was very good and Elecosoft was very helpful. We set a brief of how we wanted to use the software and what we wanted it to do for us, and Elecosoft took that brief and tailored the training accordingly, listening to us and incorporating our requests. I asked each person their impressions just after they left the session, and everyone without exception said it was excellent. The groups were the right size. There was plenty of time for people to ask questions. The training was presented very clearly and simply. We all had laptops with the application on so we could all do exercises, which worked well – we listened, watched, then tried it ourselves under expert eyes. It was very hands on. The course covered everything we needed to know, but it was also very relaxed.”

A change for the better

Beard has now been using Asta Powerproject for 8 months, implementing it for all new projects and switching over all long-term projects. Early impressions of their new software are good. “We had been experiencing issues with printing, and tasks that were not easy to perform. Printing in MS Project didn’t give us what we were expecting, but Asta Powerproject does. It’s also easier to make it look how you want it to look. We had also experienced problems making templates, but in Asta Powerproject they are much easier to configure and

the software automatically picks up the information you want to include like the date and the job number, and it puts in any details you’ve set up in the template.”

Within the IT department Teresa has developed one large programme in Asta Powerproject which she uses to allocate jobs to team members, update progress of IT projects and to gather and manage information on live Central Services IT projects. “For example,” she explained, “we are going live soon on an IT Support Desk software implementation, we have a 6 week programme to get it rolled out. We use the software to help decide who will do which task and to determine timescales. We can allocate colour codes to individuals by a simple drag and drop process to make it clear and easy to understand. We can also make changes to the process and sort the data easily. Being able to print out just one person’s set of jobs is a huge advantage. Asta Powerproject has transformed how we work – we are much more efficient, information is clearer, and data is easy to track and to distribute. It assists us with timescales and we can see the whole workload balance.”

On the construction side, the construction managers find they are all tracking in the same way, presenting information in the same way and in the same format throughout. “The software is helping construction managers to track progress against the agreed programme, ensure they have the right level of resources for each element of the work, and action alternative plans if slippage occurs, better enabling them to fulfil the company’s objective to achieve projects promptly and to budget.”

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Asta Powerproject: The power behind successful projects