

Lincolnshire County Council upgrades to Business World ON!

Lincolnshire County Council's Agresso system was successfully upgraded - Lincolnshire County Council from Milestone 4.7 to to Business World On! -Milestone 6.3 and went live on 26th February 2018. LCC are now on a supported version of Business World On! which provides a fully supported system, and a better foundation for future change or enhancements.

The success of this project contrasts sharply to the original implementation.

So how did LCC and Serco get it right this time?



Introduction

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) has used Agresso since April 2015. Serco, a FTSE 250 company specialising in the delivery of essential public services, manage the finance and personnel services for LCC including HR & Payroll, Finance AR, AP and Agresso Support.

The LCC Agresso system is a major Agresso implementation utilising: Finance and Procurement; Human Resources and Payroll; Income Manager; Project Costing & Billing; Fixed Assets; Procure to Pay; and Sales to Cash. There are over 10,000 users, including School bursars who access the system remotely. However, the original implementation had not gone well, and LCC and Serco were keen that lessons had been learnt.

The success of this project contrasts sharply to the original implementation.

David Forbes, the LCC Finance Director and co-Project Sponsor, stated that "Deficiencies that had arisen in the original transition to Agresso were dealt with well in this upgrade".

Paul Briddock, the Serco Account Director and co-Project Sponsor concurred "a well-managed and a disciplined approach to governance led to overall control and success."

So how did LCC and Serco get it right this time?

This case study explains the success factors of the project.

Effective Project Management was key

The collaborative approach between Serco and LCC was recognized as a key factor in the success of the project; involvement with all the key stakeholders was recognized as extremely effective, contributing to the success of the project.

LCC and Serco were agreed on the importance to get an experienced Project Manager. Following the initial implementation, LCC and Serco had worked with Embridge Consulting, a leading Unit4 Partner, who had provided Project Management, Consultancy and Training on subsequent remedial projects. The success of these projects led to Serco and LCC requesting Embridge Consulting to provide the Project Management for this project.

As well as bringing considerable experience of upgrading Agresso and successful project delivery, the appointed Project Manager, Andrew Smith-West, had the complete backing of Embridge Consulting and Unit4, which was a key factor in ensuring that every aspect to delivering a successful project was covered.

Bringing in an experienced Project Manager from a Unit4 partner facilitated the collaborative approach between Serco and LCC, as he was impartial and was able to be completely objective.

Project Governance led to overall control and success

The project was structured in workstreams for Finance and Procurement; HR & Payroll; Business Change and Communications; and Agresso Support and Infrastructure. However, the key structure put in place was the Project Governance.

As Andrew Smith-West explains “It was clear from day 1 that getting the Project Governance correct would be of paramount importance to the success of the project. This was achieved through setting up a smaller more strategically focused Project Board than had originally been envisaged by Serco and LCC, and by creating a separate Project Steering Group comprising Workstream Leads and key stakeholders, concentrating on the day to day issues of the project.”

Both groups met regularly through-out the project and had representatives from the various interests (Business, User and Technical) at a Senior Management Level from both LCC and Serco.

A proven Project Approach was followed

The project followed a proven lifecycle for large scale upgrades comprising: initial trial upgrade and systems testing; formal User Acceptance Testing; and cutover and post Go-Live Support.

The amount of testing was very thorough: in total over a 1000 tests were planned and executed. The planned introduction of an experienced Test manager during UAT greatly assisted with the testing process and the timely resolution of issues. Transparency was important, with all results of testing presented at the Steering Group and Project Boards through-out the test cycles.

The test scripts were all approved prior to the start of tests and the UAT was signed off, by senior stakeholders. During the course of the project, there were 3 trial upgrades (prior to Systems Test, UAT round 1 and UAT round 2) and 3 payroll parallel runs undertaken. The database copies were taken at the time planned for the live cutover to test the effectiveness of the upgrade. This minimized the risk at cutover.

UAT was conducted on the “to be” production environment (a completely new fully resilient dual infrastructure providing Disaster Recovery capability was delivered as part of the project): so, the infrastructure was proven prior to cutover and the time-consuming and resource dependent configuration set-ups such as the schools’ access to Business World On! Interfaces were already implemented. This significantly mitigated risk at cutover.

In addition, testing on the “to be” production environment enabled: schools’ access to be considerably improved, with access now taking seconds rather than minutes; and punch out working consistently, unlike the legacy Agresso system.

Cutover was meticulously planned and executed.

The Cutover was planned, reviewed and re-reviewed multiple times with the Agresso Support and Infrastructure workstreams and the Steering Committee, before being presented to the Project Board and LCC’s Change Authority Board (CAB). The resulting Cutover allowed for a great deal of work to be achieved in a relatively short period of time, minimizing the system downtime.

Cutover planning in fact, took place through-out the project to reduce the risk of cutover failure. The trial upgrades were considered as “dress rehearsals” for the actual cutover: the database were copied at the time they would be copied for the live upgrade; the processes were tested, metrics were obtained and the processes refined.

A clear Go-Live criteria was agreed with the Project Board, who were notified of progress through-out the cutover. Again, transparency was a key consideration, with defined upgrade milestones and back-out plans (not needed) if the cutover had been unsuccessful. Following go-live, there was a period of warranty, with planned post go-live support from the project team. The Project Board continued to meet to ensure that all aspects of the project had been successfully realized before signing off the project.

“This Considerable Upgrade has been a Major Success”

I wanted to send out a note of genuine thanks to all of you that have worked on this critical project over the last 7-8 months and in particular those that worked hard over the recent weeks and this weekend to meet the timescales”

“A big personal thank-you to Andrew Smith-West. Very, very well managed. You have done us all proud.

Paul Briddock

Serco Account Director , on behalf of Serco.