HITACHI
Inspire the Next

Microsoft Dynamics

UKAS Case Study

UKAS
UNITED
KINGDOM
ACCREDITATION
SERVICE

Hitachi Solutions

UNITED KINGDOM ACCREDITATION SERVICE (UKAS) provides accreditation services on behalf of the UK government. Its employees assess organisations, that provide certification, testing, inspection and calibration services, against internationally agreed standards.

BENEFITS:

- Customer queries are dealt with more efficiently

- Bottlenecks identified and action taken before it becomes a problem

- Outstanding debt has been reduced by around 40%

- Use of KPIs enables staff to take corrective action before a problem occurs

- Information is real time and available across the whole business

UKAS IMPROVES EFFICIENCY AND REDUCES OUTSTANDING DEBT WITH MICROSOFT DYNAMICS AX

"We liked Hitachi Solutions approach because they challenged our thinking, came up with new ideas and were incredibly knowledgeable about Microsoft Dynamics AX" explains Chris Forster "Being experts in risk management and quality UKAS needed a partner with a methodology that was robust and consultants of the calibre that our team would respect and get along with. This certainly proved to be the case."

Chris Forster, Corporate Services Manager, UKAS

Challenge

UKAS has approximately 3000 customers who vary immensely in terms of size and services offered, ranging from large public sector organisations to small private sector businesses. For some customers accreditation is mandatory, and for others it is a value added service, all customers have to meet specific requirements in order to reduce risk, to achieve accreditation. Driven by new government initiatives such as Green Deal, and European regulation, its business has grown and diversified, through new customer acquisition, and this is set to continue.

Given the nature of UKAS's work, their own processes and procedures have to be exemplary to ensure customer confidence. Its business requires that operational staff are able to manage the skills of its technical employees and contractors, and match these to the requirements of its growing customer base. UKAS is all about quality and reducing risk as such the accreditation process is rigorous, highly structured and involves a lot of documentation. A full audit trail of the decision making process and history, with supporting documentation, is fundamental to managing the accreditation process for each customer.

MICROSOFT DYNAMICS AX MODULES

- Finance

- Human Resources

- Time and Expense

- Professional Service Automation

- Customer Relationship Management

- Training

Information Technology Landscape

UKAS needed to align its processes and procedures to support the growth of the business. UKAS staff were using a number of different systems for managing different areas of the business. "The systems did not allow us to optimise our internal processes because there was limited integration between our various systems which led to duplication of effort and potentially errors. We needed a more integrated and flexible system" explains Chris Forster, Corporate Services Manager, UKAS.

Time For A Change

'Project Evolution' was established with the aim of enhancing UKAS's service to its customers and stakeholders through the implementation of a comprehensive Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.

The objectives of the project were:
- Improve service in line with customer expectations
- Automate team work; which was reliant on manual interaction and process handoffs
- Ability to measure and monitor Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the whole business
- Establish one integrated system to enable the sharing of information across the business and improve the service to customers.

Twelve established Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software products were identified, and after extensive evaluation Microsoft Dynamics AX was chosen. It was chosen for its rich functionality particularly in the area of professional services and project management, but also important was Microsoft's comprehensive road-map and investment plan for the product.

IMPROVED PROCESSES AND PERFORMANCE

- System driven authorisation and sign-off of competencies

- Improved accuracy of invoices reducing disputes and credit notes

- Improved utilisation of available resources

- Automated acknowledgements, alerts and reminders

- Cross company awareness of customer status and activity

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) enabling management consistency and time based escalation

- Enables flexible products and pricelists

Having chosen the right Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solution, UKAS needed a Microsoft Dynamics AX specialist to help them deploy it. "We liked Hitachi Solutions approach because they challenged our thinking, came up with new ideas and were incredibly knowledgeable about Microsoft Dynamics AX" continued Chris Forster "Being experts in risk management and quality UKAS needed a partner with a methodology that was robust and consultants of the calibre that our team would respect and get along with. This certainly proved to be the case."

Hitachi Solutions specialists worked with UKAS staff to understand their business. They challenged established ways of working and advised how to utilise Microsoft Dynamics AX's standard functionality to perform these tasks more efficiently. UKAS is a unique business in terms of the services it provides but with their extensive knowledge of the product Hitachi Solutions consultants were able to advise how to utilise all the modules to accommodate and fulfill its needs.

"Our aim is always to utilise as much standard Microsoft Dynamics AX functionality as possible. It is a comprehensive product and our experience demonstrates that it adapts to many different types of organisations without the need for extensive development" adds Steve French, Vice President Hitachi Solutions Europe.

UKAS is using Microsoft Dynamics AX, integrated with Microsoft Exchange Server and Microsoft SharePoint, to manage all the key areas of its business. Each customer's four year plan is entered into the system and the system allows users to easily identify the skills and competencies of resources, once selected this information is directly used by booking teams to schedule the assessments. This complete integration enables UKAS's staff to manage the vast range of skills of both permanent and contract staff, ensuring that the right person attends the right job, on the right day.

Benefits

Customer queries are dealt with more efficiently because all members of staff can see the status of any piece of work; including the next task and who currently owns it. This enables staff to give customers up to date information even when the customer's assessment manager is on the road.

Tracking the tasks and deadlines that make up the accreditation process has improved. This enables staff to be more proactive; reducing the possibility of delays. The complete visibility of work in progress enables managers to identify bottlenecks and tasks that are taking longer than they should and take action before it becomes a problem.

UKAS use Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the system to proactively manage its business. Different KPIs have been configured for different roles and departments, for example:

- Work booked for the current month against its KPI is available to the booking team and their managers, the information is now real time and visible which has focused minds on the target and created healthy competition. As there is only one set of data, contesting the figures is a thing of the past, and managers can take corrective action proactively rather than retrospectively.

- Each fee earners' billable days are continuously compared to a target. This real-time monitoring has enabled managers to identify those under or over loaded with work. Through greater visibility of billable days individuals or areas of the business who had not been charging when they should have been identified.

UKAS also use the cues in Microsoft Dynamics AX to provide control. This functionality has enabled them to halve the amount of outstanding debt, reduce the amount of email traffic and to take action on tasks that are taking longer than they should. "Using cues has significantly increased managers' awareness of work that is sticking and not moving quickly enough. This helps us to identify sections or people who are under stress and manage it before it becomes a big problem, comments Jeff Ruddle, Operations Director UKAS 'from a financial perspective this functionality

WHY HITACHI SOLUTIONS?

Hitachi Solutions is one of the largest, most qualified and highly experienced Microsoft Dynamics consulting firms across the globe, capable of handling complex tier-one displacement projects. Our company's caliber of expertise and commitment to customers is evidenced through our consistent recognition from both Microsoft and industry analysts.

Contact a Hitachi Solutions expert to discuss how our Microsoft Dynamics Solutions can help improve your productivity.

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has enabled operations, credit control and finance to work together better and to reduce outstanding debt by around 40%".

Georgia Alsop, Finance Director UKAS takes up the story "Going forward, the system can accommodate the development of more flexible pricing models and more interactive engagement with our customers in support of our longer term vision." UKAS found that improving their business processes at the same time as implementing an enterprise wide system was a big challenge, and the remote nature of many of their 170 staff meant that the training programme needed to be extensive. "We put a lot of effort into the project working with Hitachi Solutions to get the system and processes right. We involved business users throughout and invested significantly in training all our staff. I was impressed with Hitachi Solutions consultants' willingness to challenge us on our established ways of working, but also their willingness to come up with solutions. Some of the team have returned since go live, to help us with developments, and they still know our business and our implementation really well. We continue to use Hitachi Solutions; their on-going support has been excellent" concludes Jeff Ruddle.

Microsoft Dynamics AX is now being used extensively across UKAS's business. Using one integrated system, database and user interface has increased the visibility of work in progress, improved performance, and provided a system that remote workers can use. The use of KPIs has also enabled staff and managers to take corrective action before a problem occurs.

Through its managed services team, Hitachi Solutions continue to support UKAS on a daily basis, and its experts, who worked on the implementation project, are on-hand when UKAS want to develop the use of the system further or look at new technologies. UKAS's team believe that they made the right choice in Microsoft Dynamics AX and Hitachi Solutions and they now have an integrated ERP system that supports the business today and will continue to do so into the future.