



Farnborough Projects Limited

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Project Management, Training and IT Contracting
243, Tubbenden Lane South
Farnborough
Orpington
Kent
BR6 7DW

TEL: +44 (0) 1689 609 574

FAX: +44 (0) 1689 609 573

E-mail: sales@farnborough-projects.com

Web: www.farnborough-projects.com

Case Study – Visibility & Resource Management

Lack of Visibility on a Portfolio of Projects – delayed and inaccurate reporting

Information for senior managers needs to be regularly available and accurate. It should also be current. Our customer was having a number of problems running their Global IT department. Not least of which was the difficulty of reporting against all of the projects and being able to accurately report what they had done and (more importantly) what they had left to do. Whilst they could tell what work had been done, records were invariably at least a month out of date and required a lot of consolidation and liaison with other departments to arrive at a figure all could agree on.

Reviewing their portfolio they could not quickly find out who was working on what project(s), how busy they were now or in the future and what level of utilisation they were at. Having these details a month out of date does not provide management with the sort of intelligence they require. Inaccuracies between what the costs provided by finance were telling them and the reports provided by the project managers meant that there was a certain amount of nervousness about the accuracy of their project information as they found it increasingly difficult to compare one with the other.

Project Managers used Microsoft Project to manage their work and whilst this gave a plan to each project, invariably the plans were found to be inaccurate with overloaded resources and incorrect work completed figures entered. Work could remain in the past and other than the visible advantages of a Gantt chart little use could be made of the tool. Consolidation had been tried but had proved too difficult and so was abandoned. Costs were reported outside of the tool and this, together with the way in which the project manager assessed completeness made it hard to reconcile the various data they had available to them. Making sense out of these information feeds took a number of days effort to consolidate and present back in a useable format.

Solution

We demonstrated Hydra Manager, a resource centric tool that contains the full workload of a business. From commencement to roll out took less than 3 months (including pilot) and only 30 days consultancy was expended, far less than many comparable tools. This included training, piloting and roll out.

We worked with the customer to fully understand the IT department and the whole business and how they interacted. The tool maps to all organisations and this is one of the reasons that it is so simple to implement. By using some of the key features of the tool we were able to roll out a global solution that provides an on demand reporting capability. This automatically provides the up to date situation and requires no consolidation (this done automatically in the tool). It also does not require knowledge of any special language or scripting, the tool comes with a large number of reports preloaded and it is easy to customise reports using the many fields available. Costs and effort are all within a single tool.

Because the tool holds the complete workload and all the resources needed to undertake the work, a business can see their whole portfolio and the progress of each project within it. Drill down tools enable senior management to have an overview and at the touch of a button drill into the details if required. Work cannot exist in the past and the tool highlights this moving work forward automatically if it has not been completed. Feedback is provided from the resources via timesheets (we prefer to think of these as project

Registered in England & Wales No.3469437

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feedback forms). Uniquely the feedback form provides the workload for the resource and on entering the work completed prompts for the work remaining to be completed. In this way the resource can affect the plans interactively by stating whether they have enough, too much or too little time to complete the task they are working on. This immediately gives advance warning about the impact of the remaining effort on the plans. Traffic light warning systems monitor any field in the tool and budget, cost and effort are all monitored. Because the person working on the task has entered the remaining effort and agreed this with the Project Manager, senior management can be confident that they are seeing a true indication of when projects will complete and know that costs and estimates are accurate. In simple terms, the tool normally increases productivity by 10% or more and improves project success anywhere up to 90%. Customers find that post installation the number of projects decline and the success rate goes up as they have greater visibility and fully understand their current and future workload, the number of staff required to achieve these and they do not take on work that they cannot handle.

The major benefits to date have been the visibility of the portfolio of projects. These are arranged by sponsoring business metier and also by company strategic alignment. Each project is aligned to these customers and drivers. The whole portfolio can be viewed and the user can drill down into each area right to the detailed level.

Work is now planned well in advance and new projects can be overlaid to see the effect on the portfolio. It also allows the business to gauge the impact of changing priorities on the balance of the portfolio. Because it is resource based, there is no over allocation of resource and it shows the capacity of the department to take on new work easily allowing the business to understand the impacts of projects and priorities and to take informed decisions based on real and accurate data.

Finally, it allows the department to ask the questions they were originally unable to answer:

- Who is working on what project?
- Are they fully allocated?
- When will a project be delivered?
- What are my current and projected costs?

About Farnborough Projects Limited

Farnborough Projects Limited is a privately owned Project and Programme Management company specialising in Project and Programme Management in the Finance (Retail and Investment), Telco, Logistics and Insurance markets. With in excess of 25 years experience in managing projects, using project tools and project and programme recovery, Farnborough Projects Limited experience is helping project teams and customers improve the way they deliver, track and plan business change.

Contacts

Marketing Office
Farnborough Projects Limited
243, Tubbenden Lane South
Farnborough
Orpington
Kent
United Kingdom
BR6 7DW

+44 (0) 1689 609 574 or sales@farnborough-projects.com
www.farnborough-projects.com