"Samworth Brothers took a strategically intelligent view of what was needed to gear their project management up to meet future challenges..."

Overview

Customer

Samworth Brothers Limited

Products and Services

Microsoft Project Online
Power BI
SSRS

Organisation Size

Large (1,000 - 9,999 employees)

Country

United Kingdom

Industry

Food Manufacturing
Supply Chain

Microsoft Partner

Wellingtone
PPM Intelligence ▷

Specialist Competency

Microsoft Partner
Gold Project and Portfolio Management

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Microsoft Project Online Powers the PMO Strategy for Samworth Brothers

Award-winning family business Samworth Brothers comprises a group of 19 businesses that manufacture and distribute quality food products throughout the UK. The company employs 8,000 staff and hit £1billion of revenue in 2017. The past three years have seen Samworth Brothers' project portfolio expand from projects in double figures to a mix of more than 100 projects, presenting a complex resourcing challenge. A lack of resourcing visibility in the face of increasing customer demand motivated the decision to revamp methods and standards via the creation of a new Portfolio Management Office (PMO), tooled by Microsoft Project Online. Samantha Blunt, Head of PMO at Samworth Brothers, tells us more.

> "By ensuring that the PMO strategy dictated the tooling, rather than the other way around, Samworth Brothers have achieved a project management structure that is fit for purpose for the needs of both the customer and the business."
>
> **Samantha Blunt, Head of PMO at Samworth Brothers**

Meeting Customer Demand across a Rapidly Expanding Supply Chain

Over the past few years, an expanding customer base has created new challenges in efficiently managing resources and projects, Samantha explains. **"In the old days, we managed most of our projects via Excel spreadsheets and manual, individual processes,"** she says. **"We needed a more mature approach to help us efficiently meet our customers' needs, and so we brought in a contractor to help us set up a formal PMO function."**

That process involved a complete review of methods, standards, process and training - leading to the implementation of standardised procedures to improve visibility, reporting and delivery. Meanwhile, the end of a previous project management software contract created an opportunity to identify the right technology to support the PMO. **"The rest of our businesses were already exploring a move to Microsoft Dynamics AX for manufacturing and financial processes,"** Samantha explains. **"It made sense for us, as a PMO, to look at what else Microsoft could do for us. We recognised that if the entire business is moving towards the same system, then we could potentially link all facets of the business via a single platform in the future."**

A Best Practice Approach to PMO Tooling

Wellingtone carried out the configuration and deployment of MS Project Online. **"We already had Wellingtone on our radar as a company with a trustworthy reputation,"** Samantha says. **"We had faith in their Microsoft Gold Partner status, so when our previous contract ran out it was an easy decision to run with them. They conducted a requirements-gathering exercise in November 2016, helping us to define an implementation plan from December 2016 to March 2017 – including system configuration and deployment, plus staff training. The aim was to achieve a smooth transition from our old system when our contract ran out in March."**
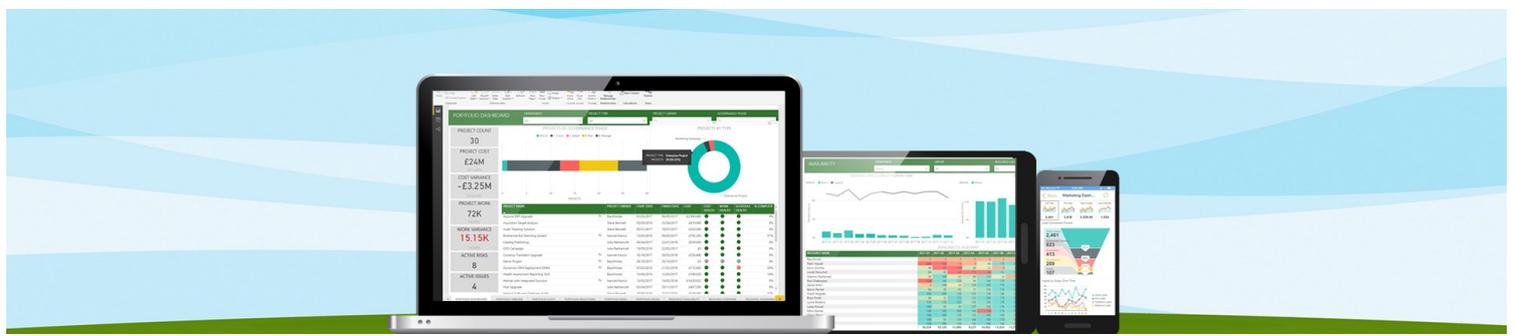
Samworth Brothers

QUALITY FOODS

Quality is a way of life

Benefits

- *In April 2017 the first baselining benchmark, internal Resources were showing as 20% overallocated. By February 2018 this was down to 5%.*

- *Within the same timescales, previously 25% of projects were not reporting to desired timescales; by February 2018 that number was down to 5.20%*

This, according to the project lead at Wellingtone, represents a best practice approach to setting up a PMO. "Samworth Brothers took a strategically intelligent view of what was needed to gear their project management up to meet future challenges," she says. "Their main challenge in the past was a lack of resource visibility – a crucial issue in a market where the supply chain is fast moving and responsive. The process of setting up a new PMO enabled the company to revise its project management methods and introduce a standardised way of doing things across the project portfolio. This in turn equipped them to identify and deploy the correct tool to support that portfolio. Often, organisations allow their choice of project management technology to shape how things are done. By ensuring that the PMO strategy dictated the tooling, rather than the other way around, Samworth Brothers have achieved a project management structure that is fit for purpose for the needs of both the customer and the business."

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A Demanding Implementation Delivered to a Tight Timescale

Wellingtone offered full support in implementing Project Online, says Samantha. "Our minimum requirement for phase one was to integrate all of the project and resourcing information we already had into the new system, giving a single source of truth going forwards. Our project and resource pools had grown significantly, so it was essential that we could get visibility over everything in order to make smart decisions. With Wellingtone's support, it took about a month to get everything into a good place from a data perspective. Wellingtone's project leads worked hard to help us finalise the specifications, transfer the data, deploy the solution and train eighty Group IT staff – all within very tight deadlines. We had to make quick decisions, and Wellingtone were happy to support us using their own Microsoft and project management expertise."

Samantha also recognises the value added by Wellingtone when unexpected technical issues arose. "We encountered some difficulties with our technical environment. These kinds of hiccups are not unusual in a big IT transformation project – but, given our time scale, this was a potentially significant problem. Whilst this was being addressed, Wellingtone planned the training programme pro-actively. They designed a sliding training scale according to role, so that once the technical issues were resolved we were still able to train and deploy in good time. As a result, we transitioned from our old system to Project Online with little disruption."

Currently, Project Online can used by up to eighty members of the Group IT Department, and Wellingtone continues to support the Samworth Brothers PMO with their PPM maturity journey. The benefits are clear, according to Samantha. "Prior to implementing Project Online, controlling our projects and resources was a manual, cumbersome process. Now, it's three clicks of a mouse and we've got that information for a person, team, or skills set. We can cut and dice the data to make fast, intelligent resourcing decisions. That has made an enormous difference, not only to delivering current projects, but also to pipeline planning, recruitment, and skills management. We're equipped to have value-adding conversations with the Senior Leadership Team in Group IT as well as individual customers and can even report up to the Group Executive Board. Plus, our business case for this transformation sees us recouping our costs within just two years. Working with Wellingtone felt like a true partnership. They provided their recommendations and expertise but were happy to adapt their approach to our priorities and timelines. I would encourage any business considering Project Online to explore the technology's benefits and Wellingtone's services."

To learn more about Samworth Brothers, visit www.samworthbrothers.co.uk

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apex alliance

apm Accredited

PMO GLOBAL ALLIANCE