

Microsoft Project Server Case Study



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Overview

Customer

Ikon Science

Products and Services

Microsoft Project Server

Organisation Size

Large

Country

United Kingdom

Industry

Life Sciences

Microsoft Partner

Specialist Competency

Wellingtone
PPM Intelligence▶

Microsoft Partner
Gold Project and Portfolio Management

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Achieving Global Resource and Revenue Recognition Efficiencies for Ikon Science via MS Project Server in the Cloud

Founded in 2001, Ikon Science is a global technology company providing GeoPrediction software systems, knowledge and solutions to the upstream oil and gas industry. Rigour, efficiency and depth of expertise are the cornerstones of the company’s services, but internal processes were being hindered by disconnected spreadsheet systems, a lack of resource visibility and inefficiencies in mapping revenue and KPIs. Wellingtone were selected to support Ikon in implementing a global project control and resource management solution, using Microsoft Project Server in the Cloud. Ikon’s Operations Manager, Simon Taylor, and IT Manager, Dan Wilson, were closely involved in the process from the start.

“They haven’t just deployed the system and then disappeared. They’re pro-active in monitoring how we’re doing, even now. We really feel that we have a strong relationship with them, and that they will continue to support us in maximising the potential of Project Server.”

Dan Wilson, IT Manager - Ikon Science

The Challenge: Tackling Poor Visibility across Resources and Revenue

“Before we looked at implementing Microsoft Project we were struggling to achieve total control over project processes and resources” Simon explains. “Essentially, we were relying on spreadsheets and people’s personal knowledge to inform key decisions. It was difficult to make accurate judgements around when new projects could be started, how projects were progressing and the like. There was also a key issue around revenue forecasting. We adhere to a revenue recognition model and we’re strictly audited on that. So integrating that functionality with MS Project Server was a key driver in the decisions we needed to make.”

Ikon Science are by no means alone in experiencing these pain points. Baz Khinda, Director at Wellingtone and Microsoft P-SSP, highlights that up to 37% of organisations experience issues with poor project visibility, 60% struggle with resource management and a massive 63% are adversely affected by projects being managed using inconsistent approaches. Having recognised these pain points and the need to tackle them as a company, it was Dan who was charged with exploring the options around Project Server. “We knew what we wanted, but we needed help to identify the best way to deploy Project Server for our purposes” he recalls. “We put the supply process out to tender and, of the three Microsoft Gold PPM partners that quoted, Wellingtone struck us as really knowing what they were talking about. They laid out the options and associated costs clearly, advised us without being pushy, showed impressive technical skill and generally came across as a safe pair of hands. They equipped us with the information we needed to make the right decisions to achieve our objectives.”

The Strategy: Rolling out MS Project Server with Cloud Hosting for Globally Reliable Uptime

Using the information Wellingtone had provided, and with their help, Ikon opted for a Cloud hosted version of Project Server, which carried considerable cost and performance benefits. “The start-up costs associated with an on-premise hosted solution were significant.” Dan explains. “We also had to consider the worldwide nature of our business. We needed to ensure that uptime was protected across all of our offices. The Cloud option promised 99.9% uptime as well as a fast, straightforward start-up process with minimal overheads – so that seemed the right direction for us.”



The Process: Configuring Project Server to Deliver Accurate Project and Revenue Tracking

In partnership with Wellingtone, Simon and a small core team managed the implementation process, which he describes as being thorough yet flexible. “Wellingtone started with a detailed pre-implementation questionnaire that made us think about exactly what we wanted the system to look like and how we wanted to use it” he says. “They then facilitated a number of requirements workshop days, to work through the finer details of the functionality and set the criteria for implementation. We wanted to keep the implementation across our wider workforce as simple as possible. So Wellingtone worked with myself and my steering team to map the detail of how the system would operate. But ultimately, when we rolled it out, it was a case of ensuring that users could simply plug in and start using it. Ultimately, most of our users aren’t project managers. They are geologists, and we didn’t want to distract them from their focus on that core remit.”

Wellingtone delivered, according to Simon, “a pretty much seamless development process. After the initial development and configuration we underwent some training, then we worked with the system offline for around 6 weeks before we fully implemented it. Probably the most challenging part of the process was working out how to get our revenue recognition to work with Project Server in a fully compatible way. Wellingtone were extremely patient and helpful in finding the right solution. We went through the process in a truly collaborative fashion. When you’re integrating a new system on this scale, it’s often the case that until you start using it you don’t appreciate its full power. So once Project Server was live we started to have new ideas as to value-adding functionality. Wellingtone were very receptive to those ideas. They didn’t doggedly hold on to the original brief. They recognised that this was an experimental process for us, took our ideas and suggestions on board and went the extra mile to flex to our requirements.”

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The Result: A Streamlined Solution Adding Value to Operational Capabilities and KPI Reporting

Ikon has now been operating with Microsoft Project Server for a year and, according to Simon, the technology has had a fundamental impact on efficiencies and planning. “From a project management perspective it has really improved our capabilities. We can get visibility across the portfolio in real-time and from one central location. I’m responsible for projects all over the world and these days I can simply go onto Project Server and immediately see exactly what’s going on. That saves a huge amount of time and manual communication. It has also transformed our resource planning processes. Because we’re a global company, we have to respond to global demand from customers. Now, when a new project comes up, we can immediately assess which resources are available to tackle the work. We no longer have to rely on emails and individual spreadsheets – which is particularly tricky when you’re working with different time zones. We can make informed, accurate and fast decisions, which means that we can plan our project pipeline and returns in a much more pro-active manner.”

The Experience: A Responsive Service Designed to Fit the Client’s Needs

Naturally, whilst the system was being rolled out issues arose and needed to be tackled. Dan and Simon both agree that the support offered by Wellingtone was exactly what was needed. “Their support service has always been fast, responsive and flexible” says Simon. “Especially during the early stages, where we had lots of questions and decisions to make, we were putting in a lot of support calls. They were always handled in a professional and helpful manner. I don’t think we’ve ever had an occasion where support hasn’t been able to resolve an issue. They’re a very capable company, they’re good to work with, they’re personable, they’re collaborative and they help you every step of the way.”

Dan’s view is similar: “They’re always online to assist and always willing to meet with us when needed. They haven’t just deployed the system and then disappeared. They’re pro-active in monitoring how we’re doing, even now. We really feel that we have a strong relationship with them, and that they will continue to support us in maximising the potential of Project Server.”