

Pioneers at Wandsworth implement IDOX Software People-Based Workflow

Wandsworth Council has implemented a powerful solution to manage and assign incoming documentation. IDOX Software, new generation correspondence management software from e-government solutions provider IDOX plc, was installed in record time and is providing the authority with substantial savings.

A huge benefit to users is the product's powerful reporting capability that enables fast and accurate performance-monitoring on an authority, departmental or individual basis.

With a population of over 266,000 residing in areas such as Roehampton, Putney, Southfields, Battersea, Clapham, Balham and Tooting, Wandsworth is a truly diverse authority. It was one of the first London boroughs to have a document management enabled website. This capability (which was also supplied by IDOX) has been instrumental in the authority winning many awards for its innovative approach to disseminating information to the public.

Correspondence Management

The Council's Department of Technical Services had previously been using a system for logging correspondence - Coral. However, this had major flaws including non-Y2K compliance. The system was used to track and record the movement of correspondence around the Council. The data drawn would be used to produce management reports and statistics. This is a particularly important process for sections that deal directly with the public, as response times are crucial.

In June 1999, the Council commissioned IDOX to develop and build a system that would combine Coral's existing functionality with an improved user interface. The system also required to have the potential for expansion as needs changed. An important element of the project was the deadline: IDOX was obliged to develop, install and train on a system, to go live by January 2000.

Richard Long, Head of Support Services in the Council's Department of Technical Services explained, "The main focus of the project was to provide a solution that could match Coral in terms of features, exceed it in terms of functionality and provide a genuine basis for continued expansion as new demands were placed upon it for data management. It was also important that the project could be implemented with a minimum of disruption."

People-Based... not Process-Driven

To address this, IDOX developed a simple but powerful workflow module for IDOX Software, its integrated suite of web applications, which provides a structured means of distributing and managing documents. It not only allows replication of existing work practices, but also replaces the flow of paper with electronic documents.

According to Philip Woodrow, Product Director at IDOX, "IDOX Software People-based Workflow is unique in its ability to be particularly effective in environments where rules-based workflow is not applicable, which is true of many office environments. It is fully integrated with our existing IDOX Software document management system and its use of a web interface results in a minimal set-up cost."

From the outset, IDOX Software was demonstrably able to provide the same management reporting facilities as Coral, but also had great potential to provide hugely improved reporting and control. As a result the introduction of the system caused minimal disruption to current procedures.

The benefits of improved reporting were evident immediately, with the system providing information for Charter Mark and other statutory purposes.

All managers within the department could now use the reporting facilities. This standardisation of departmental



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reporting structures was a major step forward.

Quality Improvement

For users, the system eliminated a large amount of time spent handling paperwork, allowing officers to devote more of their time and energy to value-added work. This has almost certainly led to an improvement in the quality of work, as well as a reduction in the time taken to deal with it. In turn, public service has improved and this improvement is both measurable and immediate.

Using IDOX Software, the recipient officer even gets an email informing them that the document has arrived for them to action. Officers can look at original documents, other officer's comments and even responding letters from any desk-top, including one-stop-shop counters.

Whilst such work-monitoring might have given rise to concerns among staff, this has not been an issue. Indeed, it is more generally the case that officers appreciate that the quality of their work is now being fully recognised. Once implemented and in use, the real potential of the workflow was demonstrated. IDOX Software is now seen as one of the key enabling technologies for meeting targets within Wandsworth.

IDOX plc's Philip Woodrow tells us, "The project had several facets that worked within different time-frames. We knew we had a limited time to deliver a robust solution, which would be fully utilised from day one. However, we were also aware that we were potentially developing a corporate solution - one that could be applicable to a diverse range of departments. The project was therefore narrowly defined in its objective and yet broad in its potential scope. IDOX adopted a partnership approach to both the development and implementation processes."

Simon Ayre, IT Manager in the Council's Department of Technical Services adds, "We were provided with extensive support by IDOX during the system's implementation. They supplied skilled and experienced technical staff to help with user testing, training, system

support and maintenance. This was particularly important as staff were restricted in the level of resources that could be provided in-house. It was also necessary for IDOX to be able to communicate with all members of the department, rather than just the technical IT team".

"IDOX had a truly customer-focused approach, which was evident from the outset."

Simon Ayre, IT Manager, Wandsworth Council

Philip Woodrow says, "Since the initial implementation of IDOX Software enhancements have been made that extend the functionality way beyond those of the system that it replaced and the numbers of users has increased tenfold. The rollout program is ongoing and we are continuing to develop the product to take into account the specific requirements of these users and any bespoke elements Wandsworth may require."

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