

Managing LoGISTics



Dynamic supply chain management is critical to the success of businesses worldwide. Gist, one of the UK's leading supply chain specialists, uses Innate Resource Manager to help deliver the goods to its clients.

Transforming supply chains

Gist combines leading edge experience and expertise to offer a range of supply chain solutions from design, set up, implementation and operational management through to supply chain consulting services.

Gist is part of the BOC Group, a global business that serves two million customers in more than 50 countries. From its head offices at Basingstoke in Hampshire, with 4,500 employees operating out of 28 locations, Gist delivers total supply chain solutions to its customers across the globe. Gist's customers (including Ocado, Marks & Spencer, British Airways, Carlsberg-Tetley, New Look and Budgens as well as BOC Group,) operate in a wide range of commercial and industrial sectors including grocery, electronics apparel and gas.

"Gist has the ability to transform supply chains through intelligent application of innovative leading

edge technology, developing solutions tailored to customers' strategies, managing change and enhancing the supply chain proposition," says Trevor May, Resource Manager for Gist Consulting Services. "With industry-specific experience, expertise and excellence, Gist's solutions bring end-to-end visibility and implementation, from concept to delivery."

Fresh food for M&S

If you've ever wondered how Marks and Spencer keeps its shelves so well stocked with fresh food, look no further than Gist, who manage 95% of M&S's food distribution. "In simple terms, Marks and Spencer operate a stockless system," explains Trevor. "The product is delivered up to midnight on day one, picked at the distribution centre to store level, and delivered from early morning the following day. We have worked in partnership with M&S over many years to refine the supply chain operations to improve service levels, reduce costs, and adapt to changing market needs, all against a background of rapid sales growth."

Fourth party logistics

Gist also performs fourth party logistics – in effect, the management of a virtual network. Take, for example, New Look, one of the most dynamic of UK clothing retailers. They have factories in the Far East, Turkey, Greece, China, and Malaysia. They also purchase goods from manufacturers who used to send their own goods in one container. This meant that too much of the same stock arrived all at once. Gist have established a complete managed supply chain solution, setting up local hubs in the country of origin where quality control is performed, organising the freight, and providing



complete visibility of orders and shipping status using Web-enabled technology. Stock arrives on a more frequent basis in the right quantities to meet demand.

A key contributor to developing and delivering these supply chain solutions is the Gist's Consulting Services group. They are responsible for discovering customer needs and designing the appropriate solution – and then frequently project managing the implementation. Consulting Services is now marketing its expertise to other companies with accelerating success, and Trevor's role is to manage the resourcing for the team of 30 consultants, matching provisional and confirmed workloads to individuals.

"I have to ensure we have the right level and type of resources to meet a whole variety of short and long term projects, and that the whole team is fully and profitably utilised. This can be quite hard as we may end up with potential work waiting on a decision from a client. So we need to plan for this, as well as making provision for projects that people are already working on."

Innate Resource Manager

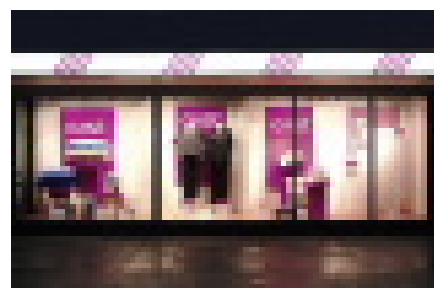
Trevor introduced Innate Resource Manager software in 2002 and he and the team now use Innate Resource Manager to pull all the information together into one browser-accessible database.

Innate has been installed at Gist's data centre in Faversham and users can access it through the Gist network or remotely via the internet. "The Innate system was a very good buy. It surpassed my expectations. I can now run my weekly reports in ten minutes; when I used Excel it took me half a day," recalls Trevor. With the Excel system, and its two disparate spreadsheets, data had to be extracted from both to make up the weekly management reports. Now, one click of a button brings up the reports he needs, in real-time: the information comes straight out of the database, which contains completely accurate, current data.

When Innate Resource Manager was introduced, Gist Consulting Services took the opportunity to introduce new management processes. The account managers now input all their potential and forecast requirements for consulting resource, selecting generic resources to do the tasks, such as a Warehouse expert, plus any other refinements in the skill set required. Trevor has carefully categorised the skills of his staff and can therefore then assign the appropriate person for the work, based on their precise skill set and availability. Staff categories of skill include the modelling tools they can use, the management skills they have and what PC tools they are experienced in using, plus the level of each skill. Individual development needs are also flagged in the database so that opportunities for on-the-job training can be identified.

Easy to use

The team have found Innate Resource Manager easy to use, and it's been customised for Gist with their own labels and preferred screen layouts. As resource manager, Trevor can see the generic resources and also look at future resource usage in the click of a button. "I have a whole list of reports set up as my favourites." Each click generates the report afresh from the database. Trevor can look at the data from different angles; by task, by skill, by department, by project, whatever. He can check any Project Initiation Document's status, whether it's authorised or not, and how likely it is to happen when it's not authorised. He can also look at team performance. Trevor produces his weekly reports from Innate and drops them into Excel to produce graphs quite easily from Innate's numerical tables.



“Everything I’ve asked, Innate have helped me with.”

- Trevor May, Gist

Here he can review capacity and examine actual and projected revenue.

Trevor also needs to produce reports for Gist senior management on performance and utilisation, so users fill in timesheets and the database reveals the percentage of utilisation – which is ‘remarkably close’ to expectations. He’s set up pivot tables in Excel to format the data in the way he wants it, then he presents the information in PowerPoint.

Next step? “I’d like to put a dashboard over Innate to have reports on demand.” This is one of Innate’s most important next development requirements for Trevor.

How many people use Innate Resource Manager? Consultants, managers and senior managers, account managers and the Consulting Services product head and product director add up to 36 users. There are just 30 resources on the system: consultants, managers and senior managers. Projects are a maximum of two years; generally, the average project is between six and eight weeks long.

Innate customisation

Innate customised the system by adding Gist’s own help file, a substantial Word document which describes to users what each person using the system does. Account Managers populate potential demand and Trevor matches this to available resources. To maintain database integrity, all other users can only enter their holiday or training bookings, although everybody has access to the Innate report function. Trevor has amended the Innate report engine to write customised reports.

“What I like about it is that I can change permissions and what people can view.” Once you’ve set up different user groups you can quickly

enable or disable what any group of users or individual can see. “The permissions system is extremely good,” says Trevor. You can also set up your most frequently used reports as favourites so you can see just your team’s work, just their own work or just their clients’ work – whatever is most important.

The software was easily installed and tested, ready to run, in only a day. It took two weeks for Trevor to test it, populate the database and check it against expectations. “It’s very quick.” It took another two weeks to train everyone to use it. “I do go back and help and re-train people on a one-to-one basis occasionally.”

No problem with remote access

Users are all connected to the network in the offices and can connect to the system from home, too. Innate have provided technical solutions to the problems of accessing the system remotely. “Even using a 56k line, I’ve certainly been very pleased with the response times.” At any one time there are up to 6 users who work remotely either at home or in another Gist office.

Although Gist have a timesheet database, they are considering introducing electronic timesheets. The Innate timesheet system will be evaluated as part of a wider project covering an update to their project management system

Trevor’s very pleased with the support he’s had from Innate, too. “Everything I’ve asked, they have helped me with.”

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