

Management buy-in and pilot workshops were key elements in the successful implementation and use of Innate Timesheets at the UK's largest private direct motor insurer.

Driving forward time management

Familiar with the ringing red telephone racing across your television screen? Not only is Direct Line's logo firmly placed in the national consciousness, so too are its products. Direct Line Group started from scratch in April 1985 selling just motor insurance. Now they have over five million customers and a whole range of products and services.



Employee numbers have grown fast too - from 63 to over 9,000 in the UK alone. Their internal structure is organised into five divisions (Retail, Solutions, Assistance, UKI Partnerships, and International) which are supported centrally by finance, strategy, human resources and IT.

Patricia Andric is IT Strategy and Process Manager. She is responsible for the project life cycle for the entire Direct Line Group. To do this she uses Innate Timesheets as a key component.

Why Innate was chosen

"We chose Innate because of its functionality, value for money, and ability to deliver in the timescale – which was very tight!" she recalls. "The brief went out to eight suppliers in August 2002, to implement a system by end 2002 to be ready for the next financial year. Innate was shortlisted because it had a track record, a

reasonable client list, and it met our requirements for more accurate and detailed project cost reporting.

"The deciding factor was that Royal Bank of Scotland successfully used Innate Timesheets. We could talk with someone who had already used it. The fit and cost was there, and it was strategically sensible as Direct Line was due to become part of the RBS Group."



Patricia Andric, left, with office manager Eve Vine, at the Direct Line project office in Croydon

When Patricia joined Direct Line, early in 2002, the emphasis was on looking at costs. There was an understanding that IT was successful in delivering projects – but at what price? Greater control, and the need for business cases, was paramount. In some areas, tracking costs was being done manually. Large projects were tracked by individual spreadsheets, but the company was growing so quickly that priorities were

changing rapidly. They needed a tool that was easy to use and had uniformity in approach. Innate Timesheets, with its high functionality and web-based timesheets and reporting, satisfied these requirements.

Key factors in successful implementation

Once Innate had been chosen, Direct Line made some more sensible decisions! Patricia was appointed Project Manager. She was the focal point for implementation, including workshops and training. “We were pleasantly surprised in terms of training,” she says. “Setting up our pilot group in December – where we’d wanted 40 people but got 90 – paid dividends. In the three main development areas in Croydon we then had a pool of expertise before it was even implemented.”

“Equally important was that there should be buy-in from management. Amongst the staff, there was a feeling of negativity about time recording. It was a change of culture. The negativity was not to the tool but to the thinking behind it. The value of the large pilot group was that many people were able to experience its benefits first-hand.

“The technical training was harder than we’d expected – we really pushed the Innate technical guys to the limit! But throughout the training, although our Project Support Office was on hand for queries, there were remarkably few. We’d thought through the structures – who would approve the timesheets, how would the projects be set up, what were the processes. We were able to tailor various elements, for example, the data fields to support our organisational structure. We did think that additional reports might have been needed, but the standard reports were fine.”

There are now 470 users, based in Croydon and Leeds. The system is run by the Project Office in Croydon who dedicate one day a week. They are constantly looking at new requirements for expansion. Currently they are not using the project facility to download from Microsoft Project. The intention is there, but internally work is needed on standardising plans.

Getting results

“We now produce reports for the whole business, enhanced to show results per division. We can see how much effort has been expended on their division, and ultimately, the cost,” Patricia observes. “There is more visibility of the true cost of projects. We are feeding these back into estimating, and discussing with areas where we can see the gap between estimates and actuals. This helps improve their estimating.

“Looking forward, this will help us to see where savings can be made, and whether or not it is worth doing. It is too early to measure the savings, but this will certainly come next year. We are very pleased with the greater visibility and easier reporting that Innate Timesheets have achieved for us already.”

Direct Line is now part of the RBS Insurance Group

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