Jersey Harbours meets the 'management' challenge

Less than two years ago, Jersey Harbours set out to replace an 'outdated' management system. Today, it has one that continues to revolutionise the way the organisation and its growing customer base does business - for the better. Happier staff, happier customers and more clients overall are key results - and it hasn't stopped there…

The island of Jersey is the jewel of the Channel Isles, enjoying more sunshine and warmer temperatures than anywhere else in the UK. It is a holiday hotspot, with its harbours welcoming more than 7,000 maritime visitors each year. At the helm sits Jersey Harbours, the mainstay of the island, vital to ensuring visitors are attracted back year after year. An extensive organisation and government agency, it is responsible for every maritime aspect of the island, from Sea Rescue to parking services and over 4,000 berths.

The challenge for Jersey Harbours was to introduce a management system that would bring together the numerous, diverse facets of the organisation while simplifying all the operations at the same time. The aim was to end up with a 'one-stop-shop' for both customers and staff, providing them with a host of information from one single interface. For an organisation with many departments and over 150 staff this was no mean feat.

The first steps

Where to begin? The first and most crucial step was to undertake a comprehensive audit of the entire business, and to look to staff to highlight any operational or functional shortfalls. From there, key areas in need of attention were identified and a detailed tendering process ensued.

The criteria was for a system that had to be tailor-made but not bespoke to avoid the scenario of a system's key knowledge repository sitting in the mind of one person, who, if they chose to leave, would take all that information with them. After a pains taking process, involving visits to two marinas on the south coast of England to gauge the users' take on their suppliers and systems, a 'marina manage-ment system' from New Zealand-based Pacsoft Systems

Lessons learned

Jersey Harbours finance and information director, Donna Mitchell, and project manager, Chris Clark, give marina managers a few pointers from their experience in adopting the new management system:

Audit, audit, audit:

Undertaking a full audit is the only way to get a complete overview of what you have in place – useful or not. From this we could see a number of shortfalls that could so easily be remedied, leading to benefits such as lower long term staffing costs and fewer paper-based systems. Implementation of the first stage of the new system led to improved accuracy in capturing visitor information at the pontoons.

Talk to your staff:

Discussions with staff enabled us to clear up any grey areas and implement methods that made their tasks easier. For example, at times our staff assumed there was reduced functionality in some areas when in fact it was the same or better – but different. To underline this, we automated some processes such as vessel registration, cutting process time from minutes to seconds and thus making the system far simpler and more user friendly. This process will soon be extended to other tasks, such as moving a vessel from one berth to another using a 'drag and drop' function, with prompts for answers to all relevant questions surrounding the move.

Be well resourced:

Ensure you have the correct level of staff both for the project work and day to day operations. Things will run more smoothly and your staff will thank you for it.

Select your suppliers wisely:

Being a government body means there are often strict regulations about what we can and cannot implement when it comes to technology. We were thus directed to select a robust and reliable database back-end: Microsoft's SQL engine. This proved to be a wise choice as, throughout the entire project, we didn't experience a single unscheduled system outage.

Pacsoft's strategic alliance with Microsoft also meant we were first in line for access to all new products that Microsoft developed before they even entered the market. Examples of such products are the Microsoft Reporting Systems, which are being integrated within the next generation of the product to enhance the already feature-rich reporting tools that are included within Pacsoft's MMS. This integration will ultimately offer crystal reports-type functionality, integrated directly within the application without the need to purchase additional software or licences.

A system for any size marina:

Companies looking to implement a marina management system such as this may not need to go to the lengths that we, as a multi-faceted operation, underwent. MMS caters as easily for small marinas who operate very simple systems as it does for facilities as extensive as ours. The New Zealand Pacsoft operation and its UK partners, Metoc, were more than happy to listen and ensured they had a full understanding of our business requirements to effectively tailor their services and the system. As a result we are working closely with Pacsoft to further enhance MMS for the benefit of both ourselves and other customers and are already enjoying the benefits of the Annual Enhancement Plan that Pacsoft offers.

Donna Mitchell

Chris Clark

Elizabeth Marina, a 600-berth facility, opened in 1998 primarily for long-term berth holders.

(sold through Metoc plc in the UK) was selected.

Thus began a journey from disjointed, disparate systems involving multi-location transactions for customers through to the analysis of every aspect of the business as it fell into the simplified, customer centric one they enjoy today.

From January to July 2004 Jersey Harbours' vast databases underwent a dramatic cleansing process so as to be ready for the new system. Simultaneously, way down in New Zealand, the system was being modified to ensure the new system could adequately take on the mammoth role of becoming a centralised administration point. By the summer of 2004 a 'standard' system was up and running.

Delivered benefits

The live system not only handles all the essential business processes but offers an added extra: a hand held device with a subset of data and Point of Sale functionality that can be used on the quayside to capture new sales and customers. The hand-held 'pocket MMS' offers the ability to capture customer information and boat details, apply the relevant sales products and provide the correct charge information on the spot while enabling automatic uploading of data to the central administration point when the member of staff returns to the marina office. Customers are thus able to complete all berth transactions and other requirements at one single location, and staff can capture the sale and provide all aspects of service without having to even leave the dock.

And that's not all. Jersey Harbours can also use the system for property management, including the calculation of rental rates, electricity usage and parking permits through the MMS interface. Berth allocation management, automated invoices, cash book and sales ledger functions also fall within the realm of the Pacsoft MMS system, shaving hours off manual labour time, boosting accuracy and delivering a seamless service to customers.

Moving forward

A GIS enabled interface offering staff a 'visual marina', an online booking and payment service on the website and a GIS map linked with predicted tidal state information are just some examples of what's in store for Jersey Harbours with the continuing evolution of its Pacsoft MMS system. The result will ensure an even warmer welcome for visitors and help Jersey Harbours more efficiently maintain its marinas.

For more information about Jersey Harbours see www.jersey-harbours.com and for details on the island's many attractions, www.jersey.com
Contact Pacsoft International on email: info@pacsoftmms.com