

Sage Construction EVision

Case Study: Apollo Group



Founded in 1976, Apollo Property Services Group has over 30 years' experience working within the Public Sector and currently turns over around £300 million per annum. First established in the competitive London and South East regions, it is now one of the leading businesses of its kind. Apollo has spent the last few years implementing a programme of strategic and steady growth, opening new offices in Scotland, the East of England and the South West.

Today, Apollo offers a fully integrated range of property services from planned and responsive maintenance for individual properties through to complete estate regeneration and the construction of award-winning schools and key community buildings. Now one of the largest companies in its sector, Apollo is on track to achieve its vision of offering full national coverage of integrated property services to the UK market by 2013.

In summer 2006, Apollo began a year-long search for a central, business-focused software solution that would support the Group in achieving its corporate vision. Paul Richardson, Apollo's Information and Technology Director, explains that there were three key drivers in the decision to select

a new financial and contract management system: "Firstly, we wanted to remove the duplication of work caused through having disparate pools of data. Secondly, we wanted a flexible reporting tool that could be used by reasonably senior staff to enable data to be easily extracted and presented up to Board level. Finally, we wanted a solution that fitted with our other Microsoft-based corporate applications."

Prior to implementing EVision, Apollo maintained data in a range of standalone in-house databases, spreadsheets and paper-based ledgers/daybooks in addition to its main finance and payroll software solution. These islands of data were not electronically linked so re-keying of figures was commonplace resulting in inefficient use of senior staff time. Steven King, Financial Controller at Apollo, comments: "Cost Value Reconciliations (CVR) used to be typed into Microsoft Excel by our Surveyors. This data was

then re-keyed by Commercial Directors on to summary spreadsheets and then forwarded to our accounts team who entered the figures once more into a range of hierarchical internal reporting schedules. Now, by having our financial, commercial and reporting

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data within a single integrated solution, the data only needs to be entered once and the rest of the process is automated using Excel-based reports - the Commercial teams enter the CVR's and the rest is seamless. For us, this means more quality time can be afforded to high level review because we no longer need to check for human errors in spreadsheets caused by manually transferring data from one system to another."

Having data residing in a single system also makes reporting simple. Steven King goes on to say: "Historically we found the extraction of financial information from our predecessor system incredibly cumbersome. The data tables were illogically labelled and linked so generating bespoke reports quickly in response to the needs of the business was virtually impossible. We had to rely on the small standard suite of reports which came with the software, but these had to be imported and re-jigged in Excel before they could be worked on. Now we use a simple reporting tool in Excel which links intuitively with Sage Construction's EVision. Our reports are now set out exactly as we want them, and contain charts and graphs which are prepared and updated automatically for us. Now we have EVision, general accessibility of data is excellent."

EVision's integration with other Microsoft-based applications was an important factor in the selection of this software. Paul Richardson comments: "Apollo uses SharePoint and so we wanted an SQL-based software solution that would link with this. Both SharePoint and EVision have Microsoft at their core so we plan to take full advantage of the available data links to gather information from EVision for publishing across the business through our in-house intranet platform."

Steven King adds: "We also invested in EVision with peace of mind that it is supported by Microsoft's long-term commitment to research and development of their Dynamics product. With Microsoft Dynamics NAV at the heart of EVision, we chose a system that will continue to be developed and supported as our business grows. The EVision reference sites that we visited during our selection process were testament to this."

Paul Richardson also acknowledges the high quality service provided by EVision's support staff. "We had a member of the EVision support team on site with us for 20 days after go-live which helped to ensure everything ran incredibly smoothly. We expected to have to call the support line during this phase but agreeing to have someone on site during this time meant that minor teething problems could be sorted there and then. This professional and responsive service has been maintained since being transferred across to regular remote-based telephone support."

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Apollo is confident that EVision will continue to support the Group as it works towards achieving its corporate vision and that the software is flexible enough to enable additional core modules and functionality to be 'bolted on' to meet the demands of the business. Furthermore, Steven King strongly believes that EVision will continue to generate internal efficiencies in administrative tasks: "Over the last two years the Group has grown turnover by over 40%, yet we have not needed to increase the size of our finance department. The implementation of EVision has been a major contributing factor to efficiency improvements in our key financial and commercial processes."

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