



# Sage Construction Intuita

## Case Study: Wates Group Ltd

Wates Group is one of the UK's largest privately owned construction companies with a turnover of £630 million. The Group operates nationally, constructing public and commercial buildings as well as managing fit-out and refurbishment projects. In recent years, the Group's positive attitude has positioned IT as an essential element of their successful business development strategy. The impact of their IT investment has been to change the operational culture, especially at grass roots level – on site, where control and cost-efficiency really count. Wates is geared to manage a variety of sub contractors in order to deliver large-scale construction projects.

Wates Group installed a business management solution at their head office, originally called Prospero, now known as unison construction, which has now been successfully rolled out to all site users. Mike Harrison, IT Business Solutions Manager, says, "The benefits that accrue to Wates now that sites and head office are sharing information are significant. Giving site users access to a central system reduces the amount of time staff spend on the phone to head office or in the car travelling."

### 'On the spot' management

Another important gain is that decentralisation achieved on the back

of an effective and reliable IT solution has placed localised accountability at the top of the agenda for those responsible – the contract managers and quantity surveyors. Everyone is a winner because individual contracts can be managed 'on the spot', which allows for flexibility and speed of operation.

Meeting deadlines with more certainty has been made easier. Delivering on time and on budget is a crucial element of Wates' service to customers so a system that helps achieve this is an asset.

Mike Harrison again, "The tangible benefits are added to the mine of information available to site staff and the improved service we're able to provide to our customers. Integrated systems on site are a powerful element of our service offering."

### Continuous IT enhancement

Wates' IT system has been continually enhanced as such key criteria as local security have been successfully resolved. Document management has also come to the fore as more and more documents are handled electronically using a simple system of workflow. This means that purchase orders and invoices can be matched, reconciled and approved for payment at site level.

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**sage**

“We wanted an integrated financial system that was geared towards the specific needs of the construction industry,” says Mike Harrison, “And, importantly one that could function where it was needed most – on site wherever the project might be.”

#### Empowerment at site level

Wates’ strategy is to fully empower their site management to perform more effectively without sacrificing accountability. They are the people ‘on the spot’ dealing with local subcontractors and suppliers, therefore their local knowledge and control provides the company with a clear competitive advantage. The unison construction system now supports an information directory in respect to available subcontractors, suppliers and products. The solution contributes to the management of vendor enquiries and vendor selection whilst also providing an easy access building products catalogue.

Mike Harrison adds, “We needed to give our contract managers their business in its entirety. Legislation relating to the construction industry in the UK is very specific and, therefore, there are only three or four companies that understand our needs and are qualified to supply specific construction related packages. Fortunately, we chose Prospero (now unison construction) as our best solution.”

#### Working in partnership

“As a construction company our business is founded on building relationships and working in partnership,” explains Mike Harrison, “The IT project was no different; it was important to establish a team and effective working practices, with each member bringing their individual strengths.”

a future with unison construction  
The future holds a good deal of promise, all centred on unison construction. Wates’ declared aim is to further enhance their central system to give remote users more

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and more added value at individual site level. The move towards eprocurement is a key driver with basic estimating processes already being managed online. An online data interchange approach connecting themselves electronically with suppliers and customers is envisaged as part of their ebusiness strategy and it is anticipated that intuita will continue to be the IT partner with Wates for these important developments.

Electronic budgeting is in the immediate pipeline and preparing sales forecasts using the system is envisaged in the near future. Business intelligence and data exploitation solutions are also in sight to provide key performance indicators to enhance Wates’ enlightened management style, embracing a culture of continuous improvement. Everything is geared around unison construction as their core solution.

#### Summary of benefits

- Major time saving for accounts personnel by not answering site queries
- Less paperwork for site-based quantity surveyors
- Better relationships with suppliers and subcontractors, eg by providing up-to-date payment details

- Quantity surveyors are able to keep a close view and control of costs
- Quantity surveyors are able to give hands-on information to subcontractors
- Assistance in monthly reconciliations
- Enhancement of Wates’ image with clients, suppliers and subcontractors
- Access to historic information previously unavailable

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