

KTP Case Study with Optimum Consultancy

Incorporating Advanced Learning and Development into the Implementation of an Integrated IT Solution

This Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) collaboration between the University of Gloucestershire and Optimum Consultancy was used to introduce new information systems and advance learning and development into a newly established SME.

About the Sponsor

This partnership received financial support from the Knowledge Transfer Partnerships programme (KTP). KTP aims to help businesses to improve their competitiveness and productivity through the better use of knowledge and skills that reside within the UK knowledge base. KTP is funded by the Technology Strategy Board along with the other government funded programmes.

Project Outcomes

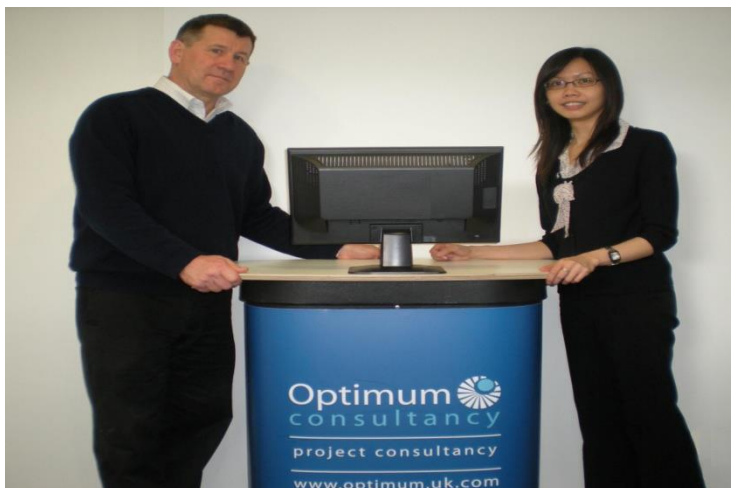
- Reduction of general administration time of fee earning managers by at least 15%
- Reduction in the ratio of administration support to fee earners from 1:3 to 1:5
- Improved efficiency in reporting, forecasting, monitoring and controlling tools

About the Company

“The KTP was aimed at improving consistency of service and capacity rather than directly increasing sales. However, we have seen a 10% increase in turnover from £2.8m in 2008 to £3.1m in 2010 which can be directly attributed to the effect of the KTP.” **Peter Maryszczak, Director**

About the Project

Optimum Consultancy is an amalgamation of two businesses, one based in Cheltenham and the other based in Haywards Heath. The core business covers project and cost management in the property, engineering, construction and energy sectors. In order to merge the business systems and associated support processes of the two companies, a rapid implementation of a new technical and informational infrastructure was required. Without this the new business would not have been capable of functioning as a unified entity. A two-year KTP project was deployed to review and establish the new business processes in the new company and then to evaluate, procure and implement new corporate information systems. At the same time, a second shorter 40 week KTP was used within the two year period to address the specific issues of amalgamating their offices and standardising sales processes and support materials, including the website.



“This KTP programme has given me a lot of valuable experiences. The opportunities and training that the KTP project has given me have helped to enhance my professional skills and career path. I would have no hesitation in encouraging others to take part in a KTP scheme.” **Erin Lau, KTP Associate**

Benefits

The newly installed information systems have reduced the administrative workload of the project managers and surveyors, generating an estimated additional £60K revenue per annum. The improvement in the ratio of administrative support to fee earners has saved an additional £140K per annum in headcount avoidance as the new company's revenue has grown. The selected Workspace software package allows instant access to corporate information on overall company performance, forward workload schedules and future prospects, in addition to full details for every job. It also provides document management and human resource management functions.

Results

The KTP focused on implementing an integrated approach to systems development and process change across all Optimum's offices. The initial implementation addressed the key business information bottlenecks of document control, sales contracts management and access to project information. The impact on key areas of the Optimum business is summarised as follows:

- Instant access to forward schedules and resource availability
- The new integrated systems play a key role in business development
- Senior managers and team leaders have instant access to information about overall company performance, forward workload and future prospects
- Management of projects has been made more efficient through the new Workspace system
- New skills have been embedded within the Company

The Associate

Erin Lau was recruited as KTP Associate on this project. She was instrumental in enabling Optimum to upgrade their IT infrastructure to a more streamlined and engaging platform. Erin has managed the whole project life cycle from planning, design to the implementation of the new software. The new enterprise system has underpinned Optimum's business excellence and efficiency initiatives through supporting standard processes and delivering consistent information to all users.

Personal development was an important element of this KTP. Erin has enhanced her organizational skills through various professional training events relevant to the project. She has completed the CMI Level 5 – Diploma in Management and Leadership and PRINCE2™ and has developed skills in negotiation, presentation, project management and leadership. Her experience in the project has enabled her to submit a convincing case for her chartered management status. Erin is now employed by the Company.

The Academic Partner

“Key to the success of this project were the commitment of Optimum's management team and the dedication and capabilities of the Associate. It was also essential to maintain a consistent vision of the required end result and deliver benefits early on in the project life cycle”. **Dr Martin Wynn, Reader in Business Information Systems, University of Gloucestershire**

This project provides another case study for comparative research in information systems at the University. It was featured in a presentation about Knowledge Exchange and Learning and Development to the National KTP conference in December 2010.