



**'You don't have to fit your system
to suit the software: fit the software
to suit your system!'**

2004

Adopting Planon after a successful pilot

"We have been working with Planon for eighteen months now, but there was a pilot phase before that too. There are so many problems with hackers and viruses and so forth these days that the administrators are always very careful about letting new applications loose on their network. The policy is to play it safe. The initial decision to use Planon had been made based on an initial paper study, so we began with just two users and with dummy data. Planon themselves were very helpful – I think they knew that the pilot was simply a hurdle that the application would have to overcome and so they helped us set it up."

The speaker is Derek Southwell, the Database Manager who manages the accommodation for the University's educational buildings: some 320 properties totalling 650,000 m² gross that are separate from the buildings belonging to the 31 colleges that make up this world-famous and venerable academic institution.

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were allegedly Y2K issues affecting it too, so it was dropped. After the pilot, we had to get the data out of the capacity record and into Planon. I converted it via Access, then Planon imported the data and helped us get it configured in the system using the PIM method." One of the most important aspects of the new system is the ability to generate a wide range of different reports using the Report Generator. The space and accommodation reporting that institutions of higher education are required to provide in order to secure funding from the authorities is complex. Southwell adds, "The detailed custom reporting on costs and analysis of space usage is important, basically because of the diversity of outputs that we

Dramatically increasing flexibility

"Before Planon, we had a system based on what was referred to as a 'capacity record', a sort of database describing the spaces and their usage, etc. This was an outdated package and there

have to produce for different bodies. Being able to create our own reports increases our flexibility."

Planon: Rocket science in comparison to previous solution

"We have made some efficiency gains; in particular, it was good to have the AutoCAD links again. Other plus points are the easy interrogation and smarter presentation, because the drawings are linked in with the Planon database. The outputs are rocket science compared with what we had before."

Out with the paper filing system

Having started with just the two users, Cambridge University is slowly expanding its use of the application towards a possible twelve users. In addition to the Space Management module and the associated Personnel Management and Address Management modules, current users employ the Report Generator and are starting to use the Document Management module. "We're embarking on an enormous exercise to get everything associated with the buildings into the database; planning permissions, test records, electrical diagrams, leases – you name it. At the moment, if these are needed, someone ends up spending hours in a paper-based filing system."

Providing proactive and reactive support

"So, are we happy with Planon? Yes – they can be both proactive and reactive, and I like the fact that I get sensible replies to my questions. They know where I'm coming from; they're not just a remote software house. And of course, they're a sizeable company with a good user base, so there's backup available for their developments."

Made to measure

Although many organisations see many changes to their work processes when Planon is introduced, this isn't always necessary. Derek Southwell was also impressed by the way the Planon Implementation Method (PIM) worked. "It's flexible enough that we were pretty much able to map our existing work processes into it. You don't have to fit your system to suit the software: fit the software to suit your system!"