

Fire and Rescue Service makes efficiency savings with integrated Archiving and Intranet Tool

Grampian Fire and Rescue Service in Scotland needed a document records system that could help comply with new legislation. Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner, BT Engage IT, advised the Authority to deploy an integrated solution using Microsoft Office SharePoint® Server 2007 for an improved intranet as well as electronic archiving. Staff are now working more productively with a single system that is more efficient than alternative solutions.

“The potential of SharePoint Server 2007 is massive so it will always keep on growing, with more functions being added. The system has been well received – even before formal training.”

Jacqueline Mackay,
Business Support Manager,
Grampian Fire and Rescue

Overview

Business background

From its headquarters in Aberdeen, Grampian Fire and Rescue Service is responsible for fire and rescue in a large urban and rural area of north east Scotland. Grampian has approximately 900 employees and 39 fire stations – 33 of which employ part-time firefighters who work on the Retained Duty System.

With such important, widespread social responsibilities, it is vital for Grampian to share and manage all organisational and service information effectively. Easier compliance with Freedom of Information legislation was the primary driver behind Grampian's decision to implement an efficient and reliable electronic record management system.

However, management decided to look for a solution that could also improve the Service's business process management systems and intranet. Jacqueline Mackay, Business Support Manager at Grampian, says: “Our employees had to manually complete important tasks and the processes were time consuming. It was easy to introduce errors such as misspelled names, wrongly entered figures, and incorrect details into the system.”

The challenges were not confined to the back office. Operational staff found it difficult to search quickly for important information on service instructions or policies. “Information was available in multiple versions in scattered locations on the shared workspace. This

inefficient information system risked our reputation with auditors and left our key employees frustrated and demoralised,” says Mackay.

To tackle the problem, Mackay and her team released a tender for an IT solution that could manage the organisation's data – including records of operations, finance and human resources – across all the fire stations, while also improving the intranet for sharing information within the organisation. A further requirement was to make the new processes simpler to maximise adoption by all employees, whatever their level of IT skills.



Case Study

“They (BT Engage IT and Microsoft) looked beyond our immediate needs and delivered a much better solution than we anticipated. A complete integrated system, its flexibility and interoperability make the information more valuable for end users who can access accurate data easily and quickly. We have been able to ‘save’, on a Best Value basis, by using SharePoint Server 2007.”

Stephen Freeman
Project Manager
EDS

Solution

BT Engage IT, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, recommended a single solution to give Grampian a unified electronic records management and an improved intranet service. “We worked with them to make the best use of their budget with Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007,” says Chris Fletcher, Solution Architect, BT Engage IT. “This type of project is best if it’s not led by IT, but from an information systems perspective because the success of the project depends on its adoption by users.”

A single solution instead of plug-ins for the existing intranet offered significant cost savings. But, above all, it was more flexible and scalable and integrated well with existing applications. “Compared to the other options that were considered, Office SharePoint Server 2007 gives Grampian users a coherent look and feel – a single interface that they understand and are willing to use,” says Fletcher.

Before designing the solution architecture, BT Engage IT conducted a business definition workshop with Grampian’s business unit managers to identify the organisation’s “pain points” from a non-technical perspective.

The key features of the solution are:

- Service instructions and policy documents for firefighters will be embedded into an easily accessible information source.
- The meetings management feature will help station managers to evaluate partnership forums and record information in a central location.
- Training centre information is now available to all Grampian staff electronically, helping individual watches on fire stations to manage their own attendance at relevant courses.

Mackay says: “The potential of SharePoint Server 2007 is massive so it will always keep on growing, with more functions being added. The system has been well received – even before formal training.”

Benefits

What started as a compliance project has resulted in smarter and more efficient working for Grampian employees. Mackay gives the credit to BT Engage IT and Microsoft: “They looked beyond our immediate needs and delivered a much better solution than we anticipated. A complete integrated system, its flexibility and interoperability make the information more valuable for end users who can access accurate data easily and quickly. We have been able to ‘save’, on a Best Value basis, by using SharePoint Server 2007.”

Other benefits of using SharePoint Server 2007 are:

- The solution is up to 30 per cent more cost-effective and efficient than its competing options. Grampian is redistributing this money

into wider development areas within SharePoint Server 2007, giving added value to the deployment.

- Important information can be accessed in seconds. For example, a Web site for each service instruction that includes a quick executive summary, links to related documents, and details of the author.
- The solution has resulted in Grampian employees working together more effectively. Collaboration through the use of team sites is much more effective.
- The portal is easy to use and the employees only require basic additional skills in order to retrieve information.
- A customised training programme designed by BT Engage IT on how to use the solution has resulted in a 400 per cent increase in user adoption within two months at Grampian.
- Information is stored in one location and is accessible by everyone through a single gateway. This ensures that the data is reliable, accurate, and free of duplications.
- The system is scalable and can easily accommodate more functions, growing with Grampian’s requirements.

Customer Profile

Grampian Fire and Rescue Authority serves the north east of Scotland from its headquarters in Aberdeen. It employs 900 people in emergency operations, community safety, and business support roles.

Solution

- Document & Records Management
- Workflow capabilities

Technology

- Microsoft® Office SharePoint Server 2007

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