

case study Balfour Beatty Capital

Business Collaborator bring the paperless office to Balfour Beatty Capital

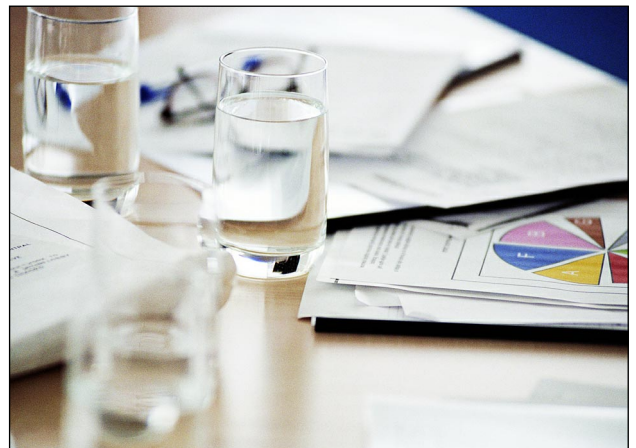
Achievement

Balfour Beatty Capital control hundreds of thousands of pieces of information across numerous major infrastructure, road, hospital, and schools projects using Business Collaborator (BC).

The BC system was seamlessly integrated with ZyLAB document scanning and searching facility to convert paper documents into electronic format that are then intelligently processed, sending alerts to members of the project team as information arrives. Now all project information, including paper-based documents, is stored in a central location enabling more effective team working with team members scattered across the UK. A powerful search function means that information about any project can be found quickly regardless of how it was first received.

Key Benefits

- All project information is held in a central repository allowing easy yet secure access for the predominately mobile workforce.
- Highly intelligent content and context sensitive search function that quickly recalls project documentation and information stored several months or years earlier.
- Improved and effective communications with all team members across multiple sites throughout the UK will enable the company to scale its operations.
- Users have the ability to work a lot more effectively from any location.
- Data administration costs have been reduced as all information is now dealt with at a central level.



Background

Balfour Beatty Capital, is a market leading investor in major PPP/ PFI infrastructure, roads, hospitals, and schools projects in the UK . The company has a broad range of skills from project promotion and development, through to financing, project execution, and long-term asset management and operations.

business collaborator case study

The sheer size, scale, and duration of these projects leads to vast amounts of information being gathered over a number of years. Project information such as bid-related documents, drawings and letters would be scanned then filed on one of 20 file servers in different locations. This created silos of information, which made team-working and communication difficult.

The company recognised that creating an online central information store, securely accessed from any location, was critical to improve project communications and support their aspirations for growth. Balfour Beatty Capital had searched for an off-the-shelf package, or one that could be quickly adapted to suit their needs, but couldn't find anything in the market.

John Bromilow, Head of IT at Balfour Beatty Capital spotted the potential in BC,

“Nothing else in the market could meet our specific document management requirements. Balfour Beatty Plc already had a strong relationship with Business Collaborator Ltd and this gave us the confidence to partner with them and see if BC could be adapted to meet our business needs.”

The Approach

The BCL consultants worked closely with Balfour Beatty Capital to fully understand their processes and requirements for scanning, distribution and storage of paper-based project information to provide a complete central document repository. BC was integrated with third-party document scanning and OCR software from ZyLAB and during the pilot in early 2006, as Balfour Beatty Capital familiarised themselves with the document management system, they also began to explore the possibilities offered by BC as a future knowledge portal and intranet candidate.

To ensure a smooth roll out and transition to the new system, known as The Library, a staggered approach was adopted and tied in to the data migration strategy. The BCL team created an upload script that enabled Balfour Beatty Capital project data stored on multiple local file servers to be safely migrated to BC .

“We decided to tie the training in with the migration of individual data sets, so it was a case of a big bang on a small scale for those involved. Moreover, it enabled our teams to be effectively trained and supported by the BCL team, whilst using familiar project information, but in the new environment. It also meant that the experts were at hand to deal with any technical issues.” said Bromilow.

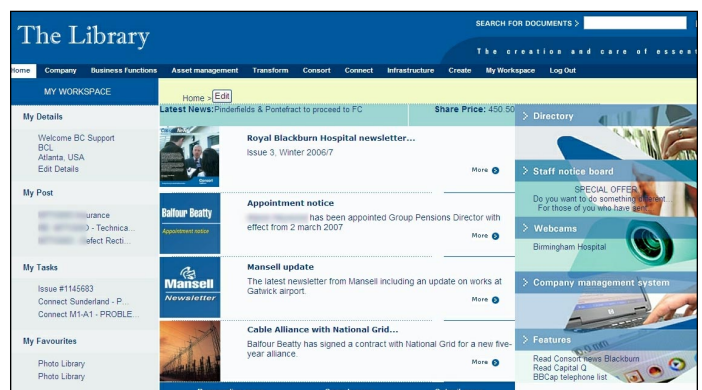
How BC Manages the Information

With a hospital PFI often taking 24 - 36 months to reach financial close vast amounts of information and paperwork build up. Previously this amount of information was difficult to manage, but now all project-related information is scanned and centrally stored online in The Library and provides a full audit trail of a file's creator and whose read or edited it, which means that it also supports ISO9000.

All project-related paper information is now scanned in at source using ZyLAB. The documents gathered are indexed and stored in virtual folders on BC, but can be recalled using sensitive fuzzy searches at any time.

For example, a letter is received, scanned and entered into the system using two screens, one to view the contents and the second to enter key information or metadata, such as 'transform schools', 'marketing', 'knowsley project', attached to the file. Users can also put in additional details such as who sent it, and the addressee. BC will then notify the person that they have post and file the letter in the relevant area of The Library.

The metadata helps the system to 'file' the letter away. The Library uses virtual folders rather than having a traditional folder structure so users don't have to worry about whether they've put it in the right place.



The Library front page showing incoming Post (left panel) newsboard, a staff notice board, webcams, photo organograms, and corporate information as well as providing rapid access to day-to-day project documents.

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Improved Communication

Virtual folders make finding information easy. A user clicks on a folder name, and the system will search through all of the information, using the metadata, and present relevant files. ZylLAB also provides very intelligent search functionality that enables users to search the scanned contents using fuzzy searches, which take spelling variations in words into consideration.

Centralization of data on BC has improved communication and teamwork at Balfour Beatty Capital. It has also increased productivity of the company's predominately mobile workforce who can access the system securely using their laptops from anywhere in the country. Previously, mobile workers used to work on documents over a network share and as a result quite often suffered from the system hanging. Now with BC the document is downloaded and worked on locally and then uploaded once changes have been made, which has increased productivity.

“ The BCL Team has always been very helpful, professional, and enthusiastic. With any other company I think we may have had problems with a project of this scale, but the team has constantly stepped up to the mark to deliver an excellent solution.

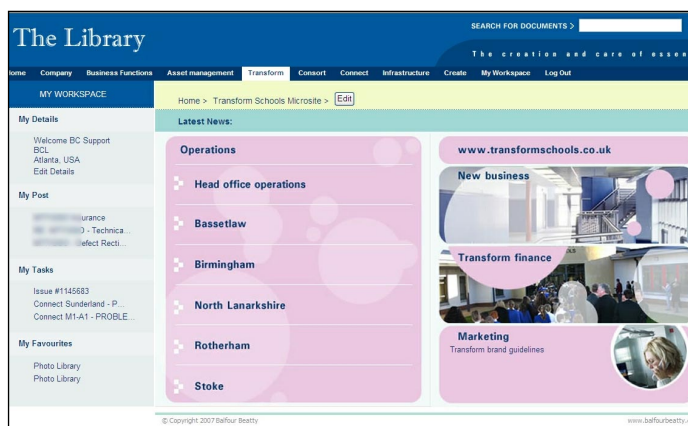
Since implementing BC there has been a mindset change, for people to adjust to the different way of working with documents. Training has been very important to ensure users are comfortable with the system and removing the fear of the unknown has made the reception warmer.”

concluded Bromilow.

In early 2007, The Library was redesigned to offer more than just a document management system. It has now become a multi-tier intranet for Balfour Beatty Capital, offering users an individual touch as well as providing additional functionality.

New functionality means that employees now have a personalised front page, with latest company news on an editable News board, the ability to add items for sale or notices on the 'virtual staff notice board', as well as having immediate access to their Post. Each user adds a photo along with their details, allowing the system to automatically build company photo organograms.

The system now ensures that all users are informed of company and corporate information and standards through the intranet as well as being able to access their day-to-day project information.



Each Division can edit its front page using the simple integrated content management tool.