



Case study Lewisham Schools BSF project

BC Collaboration Software supports Costain's BSF project



Collaboration software from UNIT4 helps Costain to achieve strategic business improvement goals and profitability targets with iCosNet, the Costain configured implementation of UNIT4 BC project collaboration system, which is now used by around 3,000 Costain staff with 6,000 additional users from its supply chain partners. Initially implementing iCosNet as a document repository, Costain is now using the system's issue and review capabilities to further strengthen management control over issuing documents and tracking actions. iCosNet has helped Costain to complete successfully the first school in the Lewisham Schools PFI project, the 2,000-pupil Sedgehill School.

Background

Costain is one of the UK's largest engineering and construction companies, with annual revenues approaching £1 billion. Since 2004, it has been using a configured version of BC's system, known as iCosNet, to manage project documents and make them available to over 6,000 users. iCosNet now holds more than 3 million documents, with up to 20,000 new documents added each week.

iCosNet helps Costain staff to communicate consistent and up-to-date information with each other, without the need to reproduce multiple copies of drawings and documents. According to Ian Stanley, IT Project Systems Implementation Manager at Costain, "iCosNet reduced the company's postage and printing costs on the previously completed Gresham Street project". When the company won the contract to rebuild and refurbish a number of schools in Lewisham under the Government's "Building Schools for the Future" initiative, it decided to make use of the system's collaboration and process automation capabilities on a larger project.

"The dashboard empowers managers with the information they need to make management decisions"

Key Benefits

- Provides staff with access to all documents and associated processes
- Ensures compliance to Costain best practices
- Enables managers to keep projects on schedule by tracking documents through a dashboard
- Delivers significant savings on document print and postage costs



“Having a system ... that supports best practice in collaboration and sharing of information has been a major factor in allowing us to deliver improvements in the success and profitability of projects.”



The Approach

Previously Costain used a separate system to control the issue of documents. This generated paper-based issuing sheets that then had to be scanned and uploaded to iCosNet. Starting with redevelopment of the first school in the Lewisham Schools PFI project, the 2,000-pupil Sedgehill School, Costain has begun using iCosNet's workflow and reporting capabilities to manage that process.

“We've been able to eliminate an element of double handling,” says Bill Price, Systems and Technology Director at Costain, “while gaining improved management control over issuing documents, and providing managers with better tracking and reporting on actions taken by team members.”

Managers can now access a high-level view of the current status of projects, and quickly drill down to identify exactly where problems are and who they need to speak to. “In the past, managers didn't have direct access to that data and had to ask document controllers to put it together,” Price explains. “The iCosNet dashboard empowers managers with the information they need to make management decisions.”

Other members of the project are also benefiting. Previously, they had to look in separate files to find out what actions were needed on documents. Now, iCosNet sends out electronic alerts, and a dashboard shows them quickly what information has been issued and actions required. “It's a good visual way to focus people on what they need to be doing,” says Price.

In addition, when users upload new information to iCosNet, rules set up within the system automatically initiate the necessary workflow, thereby sending the information to other members of the project team who need to act on it whilst ensuring compliance to Costain's standard procedures and best practices.

- Establishing standard processes and actions for different types of projects makes it quick and easy to set-up workspaces for new projects
- Including as many actions and processes as possible within the system will help increase compliance with company best practice
- Dashboards give quick visibility to the progress of issued documents and are a powerful tool in assisting project management

Using iCosNet in this way, Costain has successfully deliver new school buildings and a sports park for Sedgehill School. During the project, more than 250 staff used the system to gain access to 25,000 documents, including 6,500 drawings.

Costain now plans to extend the range of actions and processes supported by iCosNet to include RFIs, non-conformance reporting and change control. “The projects that comply consistently with our best practice procedures deliver the best profits,” Price concludes. “Having a system like iCosNet that supports best practice in collaboration and sharing of information has been a major factor in allowing us to deliver improvements in the success and profitability of projects.”

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