



OITUK AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

As cash-strapped councils across the UK face ever more complex demands on their range of services, they are increasingly turning for help to IT providers like OITUK.

OITUK has been working with public sector clients for over a decade – unlike many other IT providers who are only now waking up to the potential for helping local authorities meet their operational obligations.

“What makes us stand out from the pack is that we have ten years' experience in dealing with the public sector,” said OITUK'S Technical Director, Vijay Magon.

“Like all new business sectors, there is a learning curve. OITUK is now at the top of that curve while other companies are trailing in our wake. They will need to learn and adapt to the cultural and management landscape of the public sector if they are to thrive.”

This is no idle boast. OITUK has won a clutch of awards for its projects in the local government and health sectors in the last few years. So what allows a small fish in a big pond to thrive so well? “We're small, but perfectly formed and have evolved to meet the demands of the public sector environment,” said Vijay. “While larger IT providers are more cumbersome and less flexible, we can respond quickly to the demands of our clients.”

STOP, LOOK, LISTEN,

Stop, Look, Listen – this is the mantra extolled by OITUK in its dealing with public sector clients.

“At OITUK, we take the view that we are being asked to use IT to solve a problem faced by the staff of the local authority who have looked to us for help,” said Vijay. “It's no use simply handing them an off-the-shelf package and saying 'here you go'. Our systems are based on the results of consultation and input from management to administration staff. OITUK ensures its systems are shaped to the demands of its customers, not the other way around.”

OITUK's public sector flagship projects include a solution for Arun District Council's planning department, and the development of an intelligent electronic benefits form for a triumvirate of councils at Arun, North Tyneside and Wealden.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Faced with a 2006 deadline set by Government, Arun District looked to OITUK for

a solution to put their whole planning process on-line. Traditionally, plans are created using oversized A0 paper (drawing paper) and folded to A4 (standard letter)

size. With a typical council dealing with several thousand applications from individuals and businesses per year, placing these on-line presented a logistical challenge.

“OITUK proved they were more than able to meet the requirements,” said Arun Council planning consultant Maureen Chaffe.

“For every challenge that was presented by the planning department, OITUK responded with a detailed proposal.”

With the new system, plans are scanned and indexed and posted on the council's website within days of being submitted. Proposals are listed by the week in which they are submitted. The address and description of the proposed changes are displayed via an integrated viewer. Any user of the site can submit views or comments on proposed development via the website.

Another dimension of the system is a unique on-line measurement tool invented by OITUK. Using the tool, neighbours affected by a proposed development or extension can see if the work will affect their property.

“The approach we took with this project is a prime example of our development ethos, which entails giving input and attention to detail rather than just 'ticking the boxes' outlined by the customer,” said Vijay.

BENEFITTING FROM INTELLIGENT E-FORMS

OITUK's most demanding and technically-challenging project in the public sector was one to design and implement an intelligent benefits application form. Three local authorities - all past customers of OITUK - were looking to significantly cut the time it took to process benefits applications. The incumbent system relied on applicants filling in a 30-page form and sending in supporting documentation. The applications were often filled in incorrectly or supporting documentation was missing. This, coupled with the delay of documents being sent back and forth via surface mail, created an intolerable situation for all those involved in the process.

The solution was provided by an intelligent electronic form which allowed applicants to enter only relevant information and steered them away from unnecessary questions.

“We wanted an application form that was intelligent; that if a person answered a certain question, it would pop the next question,” said Ian Nisbet of Wealden District Council. “If for instance they had children, then it would ask them if they received child benefit.”

The process of authenticating claims via council officers visiting the homes of claimants was also made significantly easier. During the visits, the council officers are able to validate the applications on-site, collecting and capturing the claimant's



signature via a tablet PC. This information is then instantly relayed to the council's central information repository.

“OITUK enabled us to to develop a solution that met our differing needs,” added Ian. “If we went to a bigger supplier, we would have been offered an off-the-shelf solution which would have not met our requirements, which would have been more expensive and which we would have had little input into. The form we developed can be amended by us and enables us to produce other e-forms.”

These two public sector case studies represent the very essence of OITUK's success in providing workable solutions in areas with very different needs and applications, but with the same level of dedication and quality outcome.

C-Cube Solution Awards



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