

A different kind of PBS

Project-based solutions technology can help contractors manage projects more efficiently, says IFS Australia and New Zealand managing director **Rob Stummer**

Most companies are involved with projects to some extent. Whether or not projects constitute the core of the company's profitability, most corporate leaders agree that efficient project management plays an important role in their business.

A recent IFS-sponsored survey revealed that although nearly three quarters (72%) of chief executive officers, chief operating officers and project managers viewed project management as critical for future growth, only 11% of the respondents were confident in their ability to manage projects in an efficient way.

As a contractor managing projects on a regular basis, integrating project-based solutions (PBS) into the company's core business processes can help improve profitability and gain a competitive edge.

WHAT ARE PROJECT-BASED SOLUTIONS?

PBS takes project management to the next level. By focusing on centralising information about project status, resources, product data and customers, PBS supports consistent practices and increases visibility of the entire project.

In selecting a PBS enterprise application for management by project, it is important to ensure that the solution is integrated for the management of the supply and demand for all resources, and for incurred cost to flow up to financials, as well as up through the project, so you can see how each project is progressing over time.

Some enterprise application vendors claim to offer integrated project management, but it is often limited to accounting functions and it is really not tied into the rest of the applications. So

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it is important to look for the ability to connect your project functionality into other areas of the application, from the original contract through design into construction/manufacture and all the way to after-sale service, maintenance or decommissioning.

HOW CAN PROJECT-BASED SOLUTIONS HELP YOU?

Project-based solutions deliver the following benefits:

- Tracking of front-end costs, including engineering, the creation of documents and other time-driven costs that typically would be considered indirect or overhead.
- Full project enterprise planning: ensuring the functionality is connected into the application's planning engine, so production items (if you have them) show up on the project plan.
- Standard plan: Obviously, the goal of implementing management by project is to allow detailed management and to analyse parts of the business as de facto projects. But even with those projects, some parts should be allowed to be shared commonly across multiple projects. For example, standard plan capabilities allow items, such as fasteners, to become common to multiple projects.

- Re-use: Organisations enter into contracts with customers when the final specification is incomplete. To reduce risk provide the ability to copy from a template of a similar project.
- Swap (borrow and payback): The ability to change resource items from one project to another to maximise resource availability and at the same time reduce costs of holding items that are not required as originally planned due to changing priorities.

Many companies are organised in a departmental structure that at times can be rigid and territorial. Management by project requires human resources from various departments to be on loan for each project, creating a temporary organisation with its own profit and loss account. It is also important for the technology to allow management to see whether certain resources in each department might be overloaded and to take those capacity issues seriously.

Project-based solutions is truly opening a whole new world of software supporting the challenging markets of the 21st century. Technology can help to facilitate a project-based approach, but ultimately it is up to the management of each enterprise to take advantage of these capabilities and create a business culture that is agile enough to respond to today's challenges. 

QA appointments focus on customer training

CONSTRUCTION and engineering document control specialists QA Software has made three senior appointments to manage the implementation of software for its key clients as well as promoting the company's services within the infrastructure industry.

The appointments include Hanna Bakker,

who has taken on the role of professional services and client engagement manager, Jenny Potts, a senior consultant in implementation training and support in Melbourne, and Charmaine Coombes who has taken on the ITS role for Brisbane clients.

The three employees share more than 22

years experience between them working closely with the engineering industry.

QA Software general manager for operations Milton Walters said the appointments were the culmination of the company's focus on client engagement through training and implementation.