

SERVICES: NICKLEBY – FACILITIES MANAGEMENT



nickleby

STATS

DATABASE: SQL

DATA VOLUME >2TB,

USERS NUMBERS: 250+

POWER USERS: 4

CUSTOMER USERS: 50+

APPLICATIONS

TOTAL FACILITIES MANAGEMENT, CONTRACTOR

MANAGEMENT, FINANCIAL ANALYSIS, MANAGEMENT

SUPPORT, FM SOFTWARE MARKETING

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Blue chip service for blue chip clients

We take for granted that when a company toilet is blocked, or a light stops working, that ‘someone’ will fix it, but Facilities Management is a very complex business, often involving a distributed workforce of several hundred remote engineers, often all of whom are independent contractors.

With a customer list that features many of the best-known UK retailers and commercial enterprises, such as Poundland and Fitness First, Nickleby acknowledges that its success is based on its ethos of managing its contractor and customer base effectively.

But making sure that the right people are both contracted and supported is a substantial task, as Head of IT and Development, Gareth Billington, explains. “We recruit specialist contractors across the whole of the UK and Ireland, which means we can manage large estates, and provide a seamless quality of service across a customer’s whole property portfolio.

“We demand very high standards of our contractors,” he continues, “and we monitor the way we achieve customer SLAs and KPIs very closely, so we can see immediately if the customer’s requirements are being met, exceeded, or missed.”

Beating KPIs

To successfully monitor Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) calls for very detailed information, both on the specification of work being undertaken, and on the way it was completed. To assist this activity, Nickleby has developed a very sophisticated software suite, in house.

The system, called Emergence, sits at the heart of the operations and offers the company unrivalled insight into how it is delivering its services, because every aspect of the job is recorded – from the initial alert raised by the customer site through each stage of the job’s completion.

This places an onus on contractors to fill in details of their

attendance, the work carried out and materials used accurately, all of which are logged in the system and validated before processing, to ensure that the work is carried out as required.

It also allows Nickleby to build up a comprehensive databank not just of the types of jobs it manages, but also typical times and costs, which is invaluable in helping customers budget for repairs and managed their costs effectively.

But while having rich data is a key foundation of the way that Nickleby consistently delivers outstanding customer satisfaction, the real value of the system in both its customers' and contractors' opinions, is in the way it delivers business intelligence.

Relational, clean and effective

At the core of the Emergence application sits an SQL database with several million transactions held in a number of relational tables, each of which allows the system to be used modularly.

"It's a very clean application," Gareth comments, "but one that is continually evolving in line with customer suggestions, so we need to have a very flexible BI platform to ensure getting continued business intelligence out of the system."

Until mid 2009 Nickleby used Business Objects for its BI platform, but found that the inflexibility of that platform was not supporting its requirements, as Gareth explains. "We need to be able to analyse data dynamically – batch processing

simply doesn't give our customers the immediacy they want."

Smooth implementation

The decision to implement MicroStrategy was taken in the Summer of 2009, and the process of bringing it on stream has, in Gareth's words, "been extremely smooth.

"We took on some initial consultancy from MicroStrategy as part of the package, which was excellent as it helped us to build a basic system that we could use to demonstrate its capabilities to our customers," he continues. "We then started to roll it out across the whole company using our own internal resources."

The 'internal resources' in question consisted of one person. "It's very intuitive. It helped that they went on every course available, each of which was very well-structured and helped them to understand what had to be done to maintain best practice."

This knowledge has stood Nickleby in very good stead for helping customers to get the most out of their services. "Now that we incorporate MicroStrategy as part of our standard customer offering, we are finding many customers building their own reports and developing very sophisticated analyses of our performance. "They welcome this as it gives them better management information and helps them reduce operational costs through more effective facilities management."

Kirsty Riches, Nickleby's Sales and Marketing Consultant, has also

noticed that MicroStrategy's ability to deliver graphical information through dynamic dashboards, and drill down to the underlying data on the fly are WOW factors for prospective customers. "The most common reaction is 'I didn't know it was possible to do that'" she smiles. "It really does give us a significant competitive advantage."

Going Mobile

The next stage of the company's evolution sees it taking advantage of MicroStrategy Mobile, as Gareth explains. "We are building mobile capability into all our reporting, and already demonstrating it to customers using the MicroStrategy iPad demo – their reaction is amazing.

"It is so innovative to be able to just hand the iPad across the table to a customer and let them play with it," he continues. "They are, understandably, keen to get it into service, and MicroStrategy's licensing strategy, means that our customers will be able to enjoy a very cost-effective mobile BI solution."

Key business partner

Gareth Billington is a strong supporter of MicroStrategy, but makes it clear that this support has had to be earned. "MicroStrategy is a great company to work with, a combination of outstanding people and excellent technology. We are very much a people company ourselves, so respond well to good customer service and professionalism, which is what we have enjoyed from MicroStrategy from the outset." He continues, "They have become a key partner in helping us to keep our customers satisfied and grow our business."