Overview

Industry: Real-estate

Customer profile:
Genesis Housing Association is one of UK's leading housing associations providing homes for more than 100,000 people.

Challenge:
Genesis wanted to introduce flexible working when moving to new office locations. The purpose was to achieve a more efficient workplace as well as solutions building on Microsoft Office 365.

Add-On Products' UK partner Essential Computing assisted Genesis in the process by implementing solutions such as Resource Central to manage its office space usage and the ordering of additional services, for instance catering.

End result:
Thanks to the implementation of flexible working, Genesis expects to save £1 million year-per-year.

Genesis has freed up 285 desks and optimizes their office space usage. The Facilities Managers also use Resource Central to overview meeting room usage thereby cutting carbon outlet.

Genesis Saves £1 Million Year-Per-Year From Flexible Working

Genesis Housing Association, when embarking to relocate to new premises, decided to adopt a flexi-working environment. They worked with Essential and their Resource Central and ResourceXpress room and desk booking solutions.

In 2014, Genesis Housing Association embarked upon a project to relocate to a new flagship office in Camden, London
The move formed part of a 2-year change programme in which senior management envisioned a more efficient, more versatile workplace. This decision reflected the fact a lot of workers were actually out of the main office, engaging face-to-face with clients or arranging meetings in small hub offices. Jenny Quigley and Will Norton, the Project Managers tasked with overseeing this massive cultural change, first set about researching various departments to build a picture of requirements for flexible workspaces going forward. They quickly discovered that almost every department was unique and that one size would certainly not fit all: Due to cash transactions, the Finance team could not work remotely and needed fixed desk space. Other departments however, more easily lent themselves to the prospect of hot-desking.

Sometime previously, Genesis had migrated from Google Enterprise Mail to Microsoft Office 365 and was very keen to make use of a resource booking system that would leverage their new cloud infrastructure and build on familiar processes using Outlook® calendaring. Furthermore, the new solution and overarching cultural change needed to be implemented as the de facto standard across the whole organisation, including outlying offices.

Genesis approached several companies to enquire into resource management solutions for hot-desks and meeting rooms, one of which was Essential Computing.
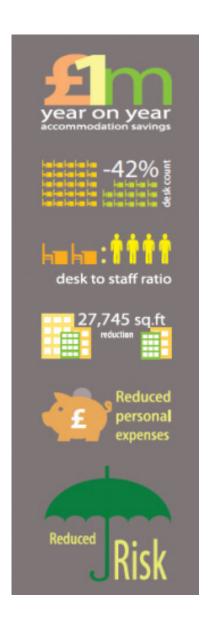
Advanced Flexibility and Control
In total, Genesis will implement booking systems for 26 meeting rooms and plans to roll out 430 hot-desks. Staff are now able to book rooms and desks in advance using their standard Outlook® calendar appointment system, and use touch screens to make ad-hoc bookings 'on the day'.

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Two types of touch screen are in use:
- Individual panels outside main meeting rooms, which show current meeting information, and enable instant booking if a room is free.
- Larger "kiosk" screens installed in reception areas, which enable booking of hot desks and meeting rooms from a floor-plan which reflects the layout of the building, with red and green "hot-spots" which indicate which resources are free and which are in use. Staff can also locate colleagues by searching information about booked resources.

The Selection Process

According to Andy Knight, the Essential consultant for the project, "We worked closely with Genesis to ensure their room panels and kiosks were pleasing to the eye, easy to navigate and that they reflected their new cutting-edge office design and colours. We also provided an induction service to help staff as they arrived on the first day following implementation. This attention to detail means staff can quickly get to grips with using flexible working spaces and eases the change organisations are looking to bring about."

Genesis has indeed been pleased with the impact this technology has had with staff. Facilities Managers also get a much clearer view of how various resources are being used and can act accordingly. For example, not heating a room if it doesn't have a booking, or working out how space might be used in a more effective and economical manner to further reduce carbon footprint.

Essential's solution comprised Resource Central a one-stop system for booking rooms, hot-desks and many other resources, such as catering or audio/visual services, in advance. A further part of the solution, ResourceXpressTM, provided touch screens to support on-the spot booking of meeting rooms and hot-desks. Both parts of the solution were designed to build on Microsoft Exchange and Office 365.

Resource Central

- Saves time and frees up staff for other important tasks.
- Integrates seamlessly with Microsoft Outlook® and Exchange.
- Gives users an overview of all available meeting rooms and shared workspaces.
- Easy to administer and use.
- Displays important details about meeting rooms, including images and location.
- Handles all changes and cancellations.

"We freed up 285 desks at our Camden Office and predict about another 200 when we roll out the solution to our Willesden Office later in 2014."

Further information
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Implementation Hurdles

As with all worthwhile endeavours, there were some hurdles to jump: According to Quigley, "In retrospect, the cultural change aspect of the project would have benefited from some external mediation. Staff was taken aback when we told them they wouldn't have fixed desks anymore, even though we were trying to provide more flexible facilities. Some even had to speak with management before they got on board with our proposals. Our CEO's support was vital in getting all our changes through. Another challenge was that the project did not have a dedicated IT resource allocated to it at the outset which led to a misunderstanding about the pre-requisites to meet our needs in an Office 365 environment. Thankfully, any subsequent roll-out problems were averted by our IT department, who were able to modify our email client implementation plans. It's a lesson to anyone working on such projects to ensure that all interested parties are fully engaged from day one."

Essential has also used this experience to better inform their technical information gathering process in the early stages of resource management projects.

Concluded Quigley, "We freed up 285 desks at our Camden office and predict about another 200 when we roll out the solution to our Willesden office later in 2014. We have achieved what we wanted to on paper but are still committed to delivering real cultural change for our staff. We feel this will only be complete once we have re-worked all our old processes and re-trained staff where necessary. Good planning and communication with staff for mass adoption is key in this sort of project. A good partner is also vital and having Andy on-site on a regular basis meant the roll out went smoothly, even when we had a few technical hiccups. I would challenge any organisation that says hot-desking wouldn't work for them!"

About Resource Central
Resource Central is a premier booking solution from Add-On Products that allows you to book resources, equipment, catering, and other services. Resource Central integrates with Microsoft Outlook® and the Exchange Server, simplifying the process of scheduling and organizing meetings.

About Add-On Products
Add-On Products specializes in developing add-on functionality for Microsoft Outlook® and Exchange and digital signage software. More than 400,000 clients around the world rely on Add-On Products' solutions to serve their employees and customers.

Our Products:
Resource Central – room booking solution – reserves resources and requests associated services in less than 2 minutes
Ariadne - digital signage software - full-scale solution providing Wayfinding, meeting overviews, pictures, video, RSS feeds, etc.
Digital Sign Service – software for digital meeting room signs – displays meeting booked in Outlook® on touch screens
Exchange Central – group calendar – provides overview and scheduling of appointments
WebTeam Central – group calendar – provides web-based overview and scheduling of appointments
Mailbox Central – email signature management – improves email branding and campaigns

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