

NHS South of Tyne and Wear adopt Micad Help Desk System

An Interview with Paul Swansbury

Trust Profile:

Six PCTs spread over the North East of England.

NHS South of Tyne and Wear – NHS S.O.T.W. (covering Gateshead PCT, South Tyneside PCT and Sunderland PCT)

Recently increased to NHS North of Tyne - N.O.T. (covering Newcastle PCT, North Tyneside PCT and Northumberland Care Trust)

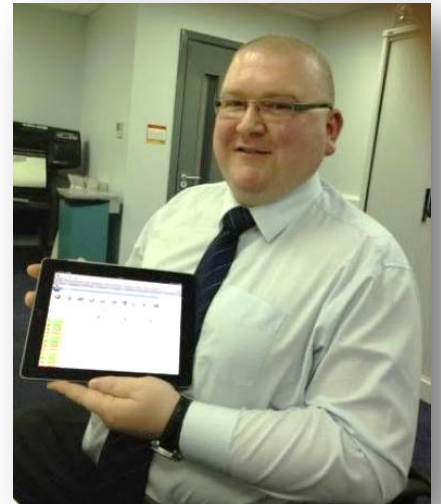
Paul Swansbury's Organisational Role:

Head of Operational Estates and Deputy Head of Estates.

Responsible for operational maintenance and minor works.

Available Resources

Staffing comprises of 33 in-house engineers and tradesmen servicing the NHS South of Tyne and Wear and 9 people comprising engineers, building officers and administrators in the NHS North of Tyne who undertake the management duties of using an external provider. All requirements in NHS S.O.T.W. are provided by the in-house resource and in NHS N.O.T. contracted out to a service provider.



History:

How did you manage Reactive maintenance?

Historically, on a paper-based system.

What problems did that cause you?

Labour and paper intensive. Record keeping was a nightmare.

What processes did you want to change?

There was a huge amount of waste in terms of time, paper, human resource and absolutely no transparency as is inevitable with a manual system.

System Selection:

What were the key drivers in system selection?

We have been operating a Micad web-based estates management system for a couple of years. This included our entire property database. It was important for us to utilise the up-to-date space data such as room function and occupying department using a 'live-link' between Micad and the new system. Every door and corridor is clearly marked with the same reference as on the drawings available in Micad, so we could empower the clients to raise their own requests over the Internet from any location within the organisation. There would be no need to continue with the luxury of making requests via a dedicated help desk.

On the operational side we had been convinced for some time that it was essential for our works supervisors to have real time electronic visibility of all the various stages of the work progress. Also for them to be able to communicate all actions via mobile telephone, to our own work force or by email to a

contractor. There were other features that we needed to consider most of which are well provided for by the leading vendors' products.

Reports need to be quite specific for us and we were not in a position to determine all our requirements at the outset. One of our concerns was the additional cost that would be incurred outside the allocated budget for their development, which is normally charged for at exorbitant rates.

How did you select a system?

My experience of software vendors is fairly mixed and there are good and bad. Vendors make promises and do not always deliver. Their attitude towards support is all important. Process software is difficult to assess, so visits to other Trusts and listening to the experience of others is not always an ideal benchmark. We spent a considerable amount of time looking around the market place and matching available functionality with the performance demanded by our clients. We in fact had decided on a system that was commonly used within the NHS although it did not meet all our requirements and the cost of ownership over a five year period was stretching the boundaries of available budget.

Out of the blue Micad Systems announced that they had been developing a system that had been engineered in conjunction with the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust who provide mental and community health services in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire across a large estate. I thought it was a brave step for Micad to make, to invest in the development of a

facilities help desk in an already crowded market place. They clearly had the foresight to recognise the weakness with other systems. We visited the Oxford Trust and were impressed with its simplicity and ease-of-use. Although the system was in its infancy, we knew Micad well and their ability to deliver on their promises. When we were informed of the cost we realised that we had to quickly rethink our current position. The rest is history.

What were the immediate benefits?

We were most surprised that we had the system up and running for re-active maintenance within 3 weeks as my experience with other systems was of a period of 6 months or even longer. Fortunately, in this case all the space records were available on our existing Micad server which is hosted off-site and the new module was added without us having any involvement with our I.T. department.

Outcomes:

How did you manage the changes with the workforce?

At every level the workforce were totally engaged with the new system, this was important because I wanted each individual to feel that they had the power to influence change.

How did you deploy the helpdesk to your clients?

In the month leading up to the roll-out, explanatory emails were circulated explaining why and how the new system was to be introduced together with a start date. From this date, all requisitions could only be processed via the new web system. Not Negotiable.

What was their reaction?

As I anticipated, the first reactions were very mixed, but as people became familiar with the easy-to-use interface, the system became the norm after the first month. We took a firm line which thankfully paid off.

What were the biggest changes for you and your team?

All my administrative staff had to become totally dependent on computers including supervisors and technicians. The future is the electronic processing of requisitions and job information rather than being handed a piece of paper. I was naturally concerned that some of the older guys might have difficulties. However, to my delight, this was not the case and within the first two weeks everybody had settled in.

How has it changed the way supervisors work?

I have two supervisors and recently we have expanded the estate to take in many more properties. The new system has improved our control of stock, man management, utilisation of time and a huge reduction in the use of paper. This has resulted in a significant

amount of time being freed up so that we could take on a substantial rise in operations with the same labour force. There has also been another benefit to us on the health and safety front. We have maintained our Asbestos register on our Micad server for some time and we can now see interactively the asbestos records against each job before it is raised. For each job the system generates a report for the entire area around the proposed works together with a live link to the exact location highlighted on the drawing.

Lessons Learned:

What would you change if you were to implement the system again?

Nothing, No changes, but you need a close working relationship with your vendor. Some of our demands changed as we went along. There were teething problems with the software but Micad could see exactly what was happening in real time and respond accordingly.

Have you saved money?

As I have already mentioned our efficiency has dramatically improved by removing large chunks of wasted time and recently a LEAN study was undertaken within the department to quantify the savings.

Future

There will be additional savings as Micad develop more interaction with their other modules; they call it 'Interoperability'.

In conclusion

I have had a good level of support from our IM&T department who have pulled out the stops by both equipping my department with Apple iPhones and setting up a link to my iPad, so that I am now able to see all jobs and their progress in 'real-time' from wherever I happen to be.

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