



Caerphilly Streamlines Operational Routines with Saffron Spice



Already recognised as one of the best performing local authority service providers in the UK, Caerphilly Borough Council's Catering & Cleaning Services (CCS) division was determined to find ways of increasing its efficiency even further to ensure continued best value and the delivery of the highest standards of service.

With a huge remit in delivering hospitality-type services across the local authority, CCS' responsibilities include school meals, staff and civic catering, police catering, meals on wheels, together with the cleaning of schools, offices, libraries, museums, leisure centres and sheltered housing.

Running a multi-site operation, with an annual turnover of £4.8 million on catering and £2.5 million for building cleaning, CCS identified that significant improvements could be made in how essential management information was recorded, monitored and used to improve costs, productivity and financial performance.

However the existing system, which was out-dated and slow, only hindered such improvements.

Not only did building cleaning managers find it difficult to keep track of the equipment used at each site, but business performance staff relied heavily on the use of Excel spreadsheets – a slow, inefficient method that resulted in the duplication of work as data was inputted twice.

The knock-on effect was that catering managers were unable to retain the latest accurate information for effectively managing food, labour and material costs.

The cumbersome procedure also led to spasmodic, adhoc reporting of stock management, recipe costing, menu modelling and performance, resulting in rushed reports when operational managers needed the performance details.

After taking the decision to replace the system, CCS worked with hospitality software specialist Fretwell-Downing Hospitality (FDH) to install the Saffron software system, which is specifically designed to facilitate easier control and streamlining of operational routines.

In CCS' case, Saffron was implemented to manage the whole business process from detailed stock tracking, production, outlet sales and nutritional analysis. Saffron also provided an interface with the existing financial systems at CCS such as the Ceder Purchase Ledger and the Cosmis payroll.

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Since the introduction of the new system, each cleaning contract is now recorded and monitored, allowing users to analyse the history of data for benchmarking against performance indicators when it comes to the re-charging of contracts. Asset management has also become easier, allowing staff to keep track of each item of equipment.

Importantly, with the impending introduction of new school meals standards in 2008 in Wales, following the consultation on 'Appetite for Life', Saffron will prove invaluable in providing comprehensive feedback on the types of meals served and a detailed analysis of the nutritional content that can be benchmarked against the standards.

The nutritional analysis package has already been put to excellent use in CCS, and Meals on Wheels menus have been analysed as well as existing school meals recipes. This will in-turn help to improve communications to parents and children because, as soon as the Welsh standard is known, the nutritional content of meals served is due to be published on the local authority's public website: www.myschoollunch.co.uk/caerphilly

Within the first year of using Saffron, the CCS team pinpointed an 18% reduction in the time spent by staff entering information, and substantial improvements were made using the creditor payment system, which processes around 23,000 catering invoices and 2,300 building cleaning invoices each year.

According to Sally Franks, Head of CCS, the service provider will reap even further benefits in the longer-term. She explains: "All catering and finance staff can see the medium-term benefits that will be derived from Saffron in terms of management information and reporting. With two years of data on the system, further quantifiable benefits will be evaluated.

"The transition from the old to the new system has been virtually seamless thanks to FDH which provided an impressive level of project management and support. This meant we were able to achieve all implementation dates with minimum disruption, which was particularly important in relation to the move from the Matador creditor payments module to the equivalent Saffron module.

"A thorough staff training programme also eased the way across to the new system, aided by Saffron's user-friendliness."

FDH's Sales Director Andrew Markwell adds: "Caerphilly's experience emulates what many multi-site and multi-faceted hospitality organisations face – the ability to quickly and easily record and track information that can be vital in making sound business decisions.

"After only a short time CCS has already reaped the benefits of having a system that simplifies, streamlines and increases the effectiveness of the management information reporting."

