

## Willmott Dixon case study

### Willmott Dixon improves project and portfolio management with Bestoutcome's PM3 software

#### BACKGROUND

Willmott Dixon is one of the UK's best known brands in the built environment. Founded in 1852, the company is headed by Group Chief Executive Rick Willmott, the fifth generation of the family to lead the business. Its operations extend through Capital Works, Construction, Regeneration and Support Services across the private and public sectors.

Gordon Maxwell is Project Delivery Manager, part of the Willmott Dixon Information Systems Project Delivery Department, headed by Karolyn Starling. His remit covers the Willmott Dixon Holdings Company, providing them with a range of services and projects, across IT, Finance, Legal and HR functions supporting some of Willmott Dixon's major systems.

The Project Delivery Department typically has 30 to 40 open projects on the go, of which Gordon's Holdings Delivery team manages around 15. Recent Holdings projects include the development and implementation of an electronic invoicing system, rolling out Office 2010 to more than 2000 desktops, a carbon data capture & reporting system, and a web portal to allow Willmott Dixon's sub-contractors to track invoices and payments.

It became clear some time ago that Willmott Dixon needed something far more sophisticated than Excel to keep track of the portfolio of projects.

#### SOLUTION

["The problem with Excel"](#) is that you cannot maintain a visible history, updating is difficult and management reports take far too long to create and are out-of-date almost as soon as they are created," said Gordon. "I also needed something that would enable me to [manage my resource planning](#) much more efficiently and effectively."

He looked at a wide range of project management tools from the very cheap and cheerful right through to some of the biggest systems.

"I have previous experience of using some of the big systems. The problem is that they are too complex and make huge demands in terms of data input. Most people end up using them as very expensive time recording tools. Not what I was after at all."

Gordon first came across Bestoutcome and its project management software, PM3, at the Project Challenge event and was immediately impressed. It seemed to offer a really elegant, easy to manage and cost-effective solution that not only gave him all that he wanted, but much more besides.

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One particular problem that he had been grappling with was data transparency or what is known as ‘Amber Fever’: a common problem within the project management industry where projects remain amber on successive management reports while dates continue to slip.

“One of the great things about PM3 is its data transparency. I have complete visibility across all of my projects which provides me with the control I need. It’s very easy for me to query any data and drill down into milestones. I can run [project health checks](#), a whole range of different reports and milestone reviews, all of which give an accurate picture of precisely where we are.”

### THE BENEFITS

Implementation went smoothly and Gordon’s project managers have taken well to using PM3 and adapted to using it quickly.

PM3 has met all Gordon’s requirements and more. Not only does it give him a much clearer, more accurate view of the status of all his projects, it has enabled him finally to crack the problem of resource planning and scheduling.

“It was never possible to ascertain what resources were working on what and when,” said Gordon. “Now I know exactly what resources are working on what projects and, importantly, when they are available. This obviously increases our efficiency.”

Senior management reporting has also improved significantly. It was always difficult to produce anything meaningful using Excel, but with PM3, accurate, well designed reports can be produced quickly and easily.

### THE FUTURE

It’s early days, but Gordon believes there could well be many other applications for PM3 within Willmott Dixon. “Obviously project management is a huge part of our business and we have a lot of existing technology to run much of this. There could well be role for PM3 to support some of this work.