



STILL MANAGING RESOURCES WITH SPREADSHEETS: TIME TO GROW UP?

Everyone has their favourite spreadsheets. The ones you use every day. The ones you know back-to-front and inside-out; the password protected bits, the clever formula, the little quirks. And it's a good job you know how to use them, because nobody else does.

There comes a point in every company's life when you need to make a decision about those all important spreadsheets. Keep them (and deal with their inefficiencies), overhaul them (and risk reaching a similar plateau after another period of growth), or migrate your data to a big, grown up piece of resource management software - and then discard those spreadsheets forever.

It's a scary thought isn't it?

But perhaps it's time to stop being scared, and start being excited.

The right piece of resource management software can make your life easier by ensuring your business runs smoother. And it won't take you long to master.

Find a resource management software package that has a similar feel to other spreadsheet-based programs. This will speed-up implementation and ensure that you see the fruits of your new investment sooner rather than later.

And instead of having one person in your company who's a spreadsheet genius, why not have a team who are fluent with your new system? A multi-user resource management program will not only reduce your dependence on that Spreadsheet Guru - ensuring their summer holiday is relaxing for everyone concerned - but also reduce duplication of data. (No doubt we've all seen various incarnations of the same spreadsheet happily sitting in personal folders throughout companies - all doing the same thing differently.)

A multi-user system needn't be a case of 'too many cooks' either. Not at all. Invest in a resource management package in which user-permissions are simple to add, remove, and adjust. It will enable everyone to see the impact of a single change, but keep the control wherever you need it.

After all, assessing the impact of change is one of the key reasons for using high-end resource management software. As project dates move, and staff have to be assigned and reassigned based on their skills and commitments, having a system that highlights possible conflicts while enabling you to evaluate alternative scenarios will prove invaluable.

These high-end systems use synchronized databases to give you an accurate picture of the skills you have in any one location at any given time. And because you're able to search for additional workers by skill, location, and role - finding that much needed extra resource is easy, and planning their schedule even easier.

Unlike a concoction of spreadsheets, dedicated resource management systems are built to do one job: manage resources. It means that they're efficient systems with no redundant features and no clunky ways of doing simple tasks.

In addition, providers of specialist programs should offer unrivaled support for them. And adding bespoke features to improve the system's performance should also be possible. You'll pay a little more for bespoke features, but when you're managing resources that can quite easily amount to millions, it's certainly money well spent.

Don't get me wrong. Spreadsheets are wonderful things. But when you make the upwards move to a dedicated resource management tool, I think you'll find it to be well worth the investment.

About the author:

Barry Muir (barrym@innate.co.uk) is the managing director of Innate Management Systems Ltd; an author of software products that help to manage skilled resources across projects and services. The products are particularly effective where organizations are struggling with spreadsheets or Microsoft Project.

Read more information at <http://www.innate.co.uk/resource-management/using-excel-spreadsheets.html>

View the original article in context at www.innate.co.uk/documentation/Project-Software-Articles/Still-Managing-Resources-with-Spreadsheets