

CASE STUDY

A Lesson in Cost Cutting at the University of Bristol

In 2008, the University of Bristol Estates Department commenced a project to implement the eSquiggles data collection software to help manage the large volumes of paperwork and reports generated following statutory compliance testing, equipment inspections, site surveys and reactive maintenance records. The time taken to complete jobs across the multi-site campus and the associated overhead costs were also proving to be very high. An automated and more efficient way of working was needed. The introduction of eSquiggles has led to significant cost and time savings in a number of areas, with plans in place for a wider rollout.



Streamlining Multi-Site Facilities Management

Situated in the heart of Bristol, the university is a leading educational institution, housing over 12,000 students and 5,000 staff. With nearly 400 different buildings, the logistics of a large team maintaining these buildings over multiple sites is complex and often problematic. Historically, completing inspections, surveys and risk assessments on paper forms was time consuming and the completed paper records proved difficult to manage as an effective resource.

The associated costs of storing all that paperwork were difficult to justify as was the amount of space physically required. In addition, the time associated with retyping data into reports and having staff physically moving back and forth between jobs on site and back to base with paperwork was a huge drain on man time. Kevin Thomas, Estates IT Manager at the University was involved in the original investment in their Facilities Management IT system. However, Kevin recognised that expanding this investment and purchasing data collection technology which would integrate with their existing FM system would make the full inspection and survey process more streamlined and allow Estates staff to work much more efficiently.

“The team within the Estates Department is a very busy one. We complete a large volume of inspections, forms and reports on a daily basis to make sure that the buildings, facilities and assets on campus are maintained to required standards which comply with Health & Safety and other legislative requirements. The University is embarking on a programme of capital investment in buildings, facilities, technology and equipment which supports its research and education objectives. Investing in technology such as eSquiggles is testament to this”, explains Kevin.

One System For All Functions

Phase one of the project was to implement eSquiggles for legionella control, which is a core function of the department. The number of tests, checks and data collected during a legionella risk assessment is now completed via eSquiggles on the PDA. During risk assessments, tank & calorifier inspections and temperature monitoring, the data is recorded using eSquiggles with easy to use drop down menus, check boxes, free text boxes and photos. It is recorded more accurately than using paper forms and once data is collected it feeds directly into the existing FM system without the need for retyping or returning to base with the data.

One of the key areas of time saving is in full risk assessment reports being produced automatically with the data which has been collected. Now, no administration is required in this process.

“The success of phase one has paved the way for future phases and we are anticipating significantly greater cost savings once eSquiggles is used to manage all functions of the Estates Department. These will include inspections and surveys around portable appliance testing (PAT), environmental waste, estates asset tracking and management, refrigeration and health & safety”, adds Kevin.

Key Benefits

- » More efficient data collection processes
- » Quicker survey and risk assessment completion times
- » Reduced operating overhead costs
- » More efficient electronic auditing and filing system
- » Better legislative control
- » Improved management visibility and reporting
- » Reduced paper handling and storage requirement

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New Technology - Existing Working Practices

With members of staff of all ages and technical abilities, there was an initial nervousness within the Estates team that completing forms electronically on a PDA would be complicated. However following some basic training this nervousness was unfounded and the team was up and running with eSquiggles with very few problems. eSquiggles is one of few systems which can adapt an organisation's existing paper forms into electronic forms – meaning that forms completed on the PDA can match the exact wording and sequence of questions on existing paper forms. There is a great benefit in maintaining an element of familiarity for users.

“The need for a system which was functionally rich, yet easy to use and with the capability to adopt our existing processes and paperwork was paramount. The project has initially focused on legionella control which involves a number of water tests, risk assessments and forms. To start from scratch with new forms and terminology would have been too time consuming. The fact that the guys within the eSquiggles team could take all of our existing forms and load them as electronic forms on the PDAs was a key selling point for us.

Also, at various times we are required to amend forms or questions due to internal or legislative reasons. The Forms Designer within eSquiggles is so intuitive that almost anyone in the team can make these changes on the system, or indeed design a new form, without us having to rely on the supplier. This saves us time and money. I've been pleased with the way the team has taken the new technology on

board and got to grips with how to use it. It won't be long before searching through reams of paper forms looking for that one inspection sheet is a distant memory”, says Kevin.

Management Reporting

The University is bound by legislation and internal service level agreements and in the past the related management reporting was an onerous and time consuming task. Kevin says, “With the integrated management and exception reporting function within eSquiggles, reporting is quick and easy. The data is easily accessible and accurate, meaning we can report back to the University and external bodies quickly and with confidence. The time saved in doing this is another example of making cost savings.”

The Estates department plans to utilise the electronic logbook function within eSquiggles to publicise all of their asset “logbooks” on the University intranet to provide complete transparency for all interested parties.

Meeting Efficiency Targets

The project has been deemed a huge success to date and Kevin looks forward to future phases of the project. “The department had great expectations from the project and to date it is meeting cost reduction and efficiency expectations. We have been impressed by the flexibility of eSquiggles and its ease of use. We are constantly thinking of new ways we can use eSquiggles to improve our ways of working and provide integration where it previously seemed too difficult. The easy integration with many of our existing FM systems and processes has been a key

factor in reducing operating overhead costs. We consider it a core Estates package and it underpins our strategy for moving forward with a large proportion of the daily activity within the department. We are now planning for the next phase of the project and are confident it will be saving us more money and making us even more efficient in the coming months.”

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