SmartCore at Transport for London

How TfL used SmartCore to reduce complexity in the resource management and capacity planning processes

THE CHALLENGE

As the organisation responsible for most of the capital's transport systems, Transport for London (TfL) has been keeping the city moving for decades.

With a skilled workforce drawn from numerous domains and professions, managing many complex and time-critical projects, the organisation needs to manage its resources efficiently and effectively.

TfL used to carry out resource planning on spreadsheets. "It would take weeks to get any information and by the time we got the data collated, the moment had passed," explains Victoria Bayley, Senior Resource Lead at TfL.

Teams struggled with ways of working and slow decision-making that didn't align with the way the organisation wanted to work and hampered decision making. "Without the information, we had less fair, less consistent, less transparent ways of working and never had a joined up view," Victoria says. This prevented managers from developing people's careers and taking advantage of agility.

TfL wanted to remove complexity from the process and manage staff capability to ensure that resources with the right credentials, accreditations and skills could easily be identified across the diverse and often technical workforce. In addition, they wanted to improve resource management so that the right people could be allocated to appropriate projects in a way that provided a forward-looking view of resource needs across the organisation.

INDUSTRY
Government & Public Services

FOCUS
Resource & Capability Management

LOCATION
UK-wide

USERS
3,800+

"With SmartCore questions that took a week to answer can be answered live in meetings."

Victoria Bayley,
Senior Resource Lead,
Transport for London

APPROACH

The TfL team undertook a rigorous market research exercise, including demos of 13 different tools, a proof of concept with one tool and a software trial with another, before concluding that SmartCore was best able to meet their needs.

"Ninth Wave understood the requirement and presented it back to us," explains Victoria. TfL had originally wanted an off-the-shelf product and were a bit nervous about the high level of customisation the tool offers so the Ninth Wave team arranged for TfL's experts to meet another of their clients with a similarly complex business. "That convinced us that tailoring was a benefit," Victoria says.

TfL involved a wide range of stakeholders in the decision-making with the goal to go live in two areas: the Engineering and Major Projects directorates. "We involved colleagues who might use it in the future," Victoria says. "We wanted it to be a TfL tool."

The implementation period was intensive. The system was configured by Ninth Wave in stages, with regular input from the TfL team, in order to align it with TfL's organisation and reporting structures, and to consolidate and support TfL processes for allocating resources and measuring capabilities.

The tool also underwent rigorous functional and performance testing, which meant there were very few post-implementation issues to resolve.

Additionally, a lot of work went into ensuring that the business fully bought into the system and that it produced the results the TfL team expected. Ninth Wave provided training and documentation and TfL's resource management team became the super users to support end users.

Since the initial implementation, the solution has been rolled out to other departments including Asset Performance & Capital Delivery and London Rail and now has 3,800 users.

Improved access to information

"It's much easier to prepare the information for meetings," says Victoria. "Packs that used to take a day now take an hour. Things that took a week to collate can be answered live in meetings meaning better decisions can be made."

SmartCore allows teams to compare projects. "Data highlights lines of enquiry," Victoria says. They can dive into why one project can do a similar activity with fewer staff than another project and investigate what is being done differently so lessons learned can be shared across teams.

SmartCore provides resourcing information to project managers, resource managers and discipline leads as well as overall management information on utilisation and skills needs.

Individuals record their skills and capabilities against competencies appropriate to their role and these are reviewed by line managers and subject matter experts, providing a valuable repository of information across the organisation.

Improved workforce planning

Prior to implementing SmartCore, workforce planning was fragmented across multiple spreadsheets and departments. Now the TfL team has a holistic view of demand and capacity. "We have a competitive recruitment market and like many similar companies it can be difficult to attract candidates," Victoria says. "It's important to predict what's coming and plan ahead for recruitment requirements."

The team can now relate recruitment and planning questions back to spend and analyse headcount, taking into account both permanent staff and contractors, to better support informed decision making about the workforce. "We have a joined-up view and there is demand for more information," Victoria adds.

Improved transparency

The Mayor's transport strategy outlines how the Mayor wants to shape London's transport for the future, including inclusivity. Improving the transparency of data gives people more ownership of their own data. They can see what projects they are booked to – and what their colleagues are working on. "There are no secrets," Victoria adds.

Team members can see who is assigned to what projects, which encourages fairness and consistency. It allows the management community better visibility to develop their teams' skills and provide development opportunities.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Since implementing SmartCore, TfL has been able to stop using separate spreadsheets that made it difficult to align processes and see the bigger picture of what is going on across the organisation.

"We, and the entire Greater London Authority family, are proud to champion small businesses and suppliers where we can and in using SmartCore we have introduced a smaller sized supplier to a wider audience" Victoria says.

TfL's resource team can now better support the business with matching capability and capacity to supply and demand. "We can make sure that the right person is in the right place at the right time," Victoria says.

Are you facing similar challenges with your project or resource management tools? Get in touch to find out how we can help!

smartcoreppm.com

sales@ninthwave.co.uk

+44 207 403 4433