

CAN AN ASSET MANAGEMENT SYSTEM CHANGE ASSET CULTURE? THE FAMIS STORY

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Abstract

Frankston City Council was faced with a number of challenges implementing a suitable asset management system. A new approach transformed this project and in June 2014 the first phase was successfully implemented. Infor Public Sector (IPS) and Kern Mobile systems, collectively known internally as FAMIS (Frankston Asset Management Information System), have improved operational efficiency and customer service. Critical to the project's success has been a thorough review of business processes, visionary leadership, effective on the ground support and identifying and recruiting the necessary resources.

Key Words

Strategic asset management, asset management system implementation, business processes, system design, local government, project management.

Introduction

In 2008 Frankston City Council purchased an asset management system and commenced the journey towards system implementation. Five years later, there were no visible results and Council was ready to cancel the project.

Council manages a portfolio of assets valued at more than \$1.2 billion (2013/14 Annual Report). The overall standard of asset knowledge had previously been poor, mainly due to the historic ad hoc approach to asset data collection and storage and long-term use of disconnected stand-alone information systems and databases (Frankston City Council Asset Management Strategy 2013-2017, p.6).

Council's expectation was that the new system would improve overall asset management, leading to greater efficiency and cost savings. The first few years of the project focused on asset data collection.

Although it was a necessary exercise, the system implementation lacked an overall strategic focus and required a fresh approach.

New Approach

This project was turned around through effective executive support, strong leadership on the ground, appropriate project resourcing and applying a project management methodology to system's implementation. A newly appointed Manager Sustainable Assets proved a highly engaged project sponsor, willing to give directions and address issues.

A Project Control Group (PCG) was established with senior staff including:

- Director City Development, Project Executive Sponsor
- Director Corporate Services
- Manager Sustainable Assets
- Manager Operations

- IT Manager
- Customer Service Manager.

The PCG has been effective in setting the strategic direction, addressing change management issues and gaining the support of the CEO, Councillors and the other Council Directors and Managers.

Getting the right people on the project team has been one of the main project challenges. Two new systems needed to be configured and integrated with two existing Council systems – a Customer Request System and a Geographic Information System (GIS).

Various skills and expertise have been required throughout various phases of development: a business analyst, system specialists, visual basic programmer, data management specialist, system integration, system support and training staff. This has been achieved by appointing permanent staff, secondments and using vendor resources as well as external consultants. The project has been managed using a project management methodology - essential for a project of this complexity.

Before the system implementation phase it was essential to review the business processes and design a maintenance management approach for all Council assets. The first phase of the project has been driven by the requirement to comply with the Road Management Plan (RMP) – a legal obligation for Victorian councils. As a result of the RMP review, a number of process improvements were identified and service standards set.

Reactive maintenance service standards were reviewed along with scope, frequency of inspections and routine maintenance. A number of efficiencies have been gained through this process alone: the timelines to complete some works reduced from three years to six months, and a risk based approach to work prioritisation has been introduced. These process improvements

changed the work maintenance culture and provided a stronger customer service focus, resulting in more efficient service. All of this has been achieved by the Strategic Asset Management team. New standards, clearer business processes and asset management reporting requirements all contributed to the new system design.

Implementation

Leadership from the immediate supervisors of the system's users has been critical to the project's success. The system has introduced many changes to the end users who needed ongoing support to help them to adjust to the new business processes and technology.

The first works management team went live in June 2014. Council staff started using the latest mobile technology – Panasonic Toughpads with Kern Mobile system fully integrated with the main asset management system IPS (also known as Hansen8). Resident requests, logged by Council's Customer Relations team appear on mobile tablets within minutes, ready to be assessed and actioned by operations staff, using the new and improved business processes supported by the system.



Figure 1 – End users during the final system testing

The user friendly design of the mobile solution was achieved by creating a logical workflow with drop-down lists and tick boxes, minimising the need for typing. This also ensures that the data is validated at the point of entry and the business rules are enforced. Other convenient features include the built in access to the maps that display the location of the issue, as well as easy access to relevant documents including service standards, traffic management plans and manuals.



Figure 2 – Kern Mobile screen.

All information on completed work orders is passed on to the main desktop system in real time. The service requests in the Customer Service System are also updated with the progress in real time, meaning the Customer Relations team can update residents on the works progress without the need to phone other staff for updated information.

The system adoption level by users has been high, despite some challenges. This is particularly impressive given the majority of users had not previously used tablets or smart phone devices.

Benefits

Within the first two to three months of Council using the new asset management system, its benefits and future potential became clear. One of the immediate benefits was improved customer service. The new system automatically converts a customer service request logged in Pathway Customer Request System into a work order that is automatically sent to the appropriate officer in the field. The work progress information updates the customer request and enables the Customer Relations team to deal with repeat and duplicate enquiries more efficiently.

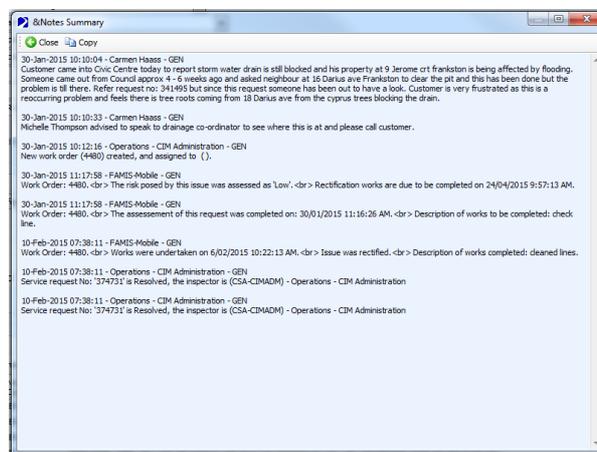


Figure 3 – Pathway CRS screen, showing the key information flowing from FAMIS.

The system also records information not previously available. This means Council can effectively guide workflow improvement and produce reports to monitor compliance with the service standards.

Other reporting examples include crew efficiency, defect cause and overdue work orders. The system has also helped achieve operational efficiencies by reducing reliance on administration staff to print work orders and update customer relations requests. It is clear that once fully implemented, the system will bring further benefits by supporting evidence based decision making.

FAMIS - DEFECTS CAUSE REPORT
 FROM Completed Date: 1/02/2015 TO Completed Date: 28/02/2015

ASSET CLASS & DESC	CAUSES											No. WOs Completed	
	Ageing	Animal	Construct	Normal	Notapprec	Other	Storm	Tree Roots	Utility	Vandalism	Vehicle		Work/yother
BRIDGE/CULV Bridges & Major Culverts													
B-REA-001	Bridges Major Culvert Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
BRIDGE/CULV Bridges & Major Culverts													
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
COUNC/VEGET Council Land Vegetation													
CLV-REA-006	Fallen Limb or Fallen Tree Removal - Council Land	22	0	1	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	35
COUNC/VEGET Council Land Vegetation													
		22	0	1	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	35
DRAINAGE Drainage													
D-REA-001	Clear Blocked Drainage Pits	11	0	0	7	1	1	28	3	0	2	0	54
D-REA-002	Clear Blocked Drainage Pipes & Culverts	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4

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 Series Code: 2010

Figure 4 – System report.

Conclusion

The asset management system did not change the asset culture - it worked the other way around. Organisational and cultural change is an important prerequisite to any

Biographies

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Julia is a system implementation specialist with more than 10 years of experience in both local government and private industries. Over the past two years, Julia has been focusing on delivering one of the Council’s key strategic projects – an asset management system . Julia has a Graduate Diploma in Information Systems (Monash) and a Diploma of Project Management. Julia is a member of the Project Management Institute. When not project managing, Julia enjoys hiking, skiing and boogie-boarding with her two children. You can contact Julia by emailing at julia@frankston.vic.gov.au, by telephoning (+61) 400 621 208 or by mail: 30 Davey Street, Frankston, VIC, Australia, 3199.

major system implementation project. Addressing inefficient business processes ensures the correct system design. The system, in turn, helps to cement the changes and support new business processes.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge the support and guidance of Vito Albicini, Director City Development, Frankston City Council, in preparation of this paper, as well as for his vision and direction of the project. The on-going support of the following staff at Frankston City Council is also greatly appreciated: Craig Dinsdale, Rohan Puls, Sue Davies, Lynda Clark, Trevor Worland, Juan Puffleau, Stephen Flack, Lauren Day, Luke Ure, Chris Pocock, Ian Sparkes, Wayne Jackson and all the staff who are now using the new system. A special thank you goes to Fiona Marmaras from Integr8.