

meritgroup



Case Study:
Market Intelligence

Business Overview

Emap Glenigan is the leading supplier of market intelligence and data to the construction industry. The company tracks every construction project underway in the UK from small residential developments to large public sector undertakings.

In total, they track 800,000 construction projects annually, where the source data is largely drawn from planning applications lodged at 440 Local Authorities across the UK.

For large commercial planning applications, the company undertakes extensive research with owners, architects, engineers and advisors to build an unparalleled level of detail on the major projects in the UK.



Challenges Facing Emap Glenigan

The construction sector was under relentless financial pressure, as the whole industry bore the brunt of recession in 2008 / 2009. With the company's dependency on the sector, it was important to take proactive steps to minimize the cost base in anticipation of possible adverse conditions on revenue.

In addition to the need to reduce costs, the company required a flexible resource which would be easy to flex up and down, with the peaks and troughs of the industry activity.

Thirdly, the company had a desire to help free up management time, to focus on possible new areas of revenue and to extend its market intelligence offerings to a higher level of sophistication, where higher levels of revenue and margins could be achieved.

Risk Mitigation in the Merit Offshoring Solution






Accumulated Expertise

There was a concern that many years of accumulated experience in this research would be lost in the outsourcing process.

Merit and Glenigan worked to mitigate this by retaining a small number of key staff to help direct the outsourced resources and to monitor the quality of work as well as advising, guiding and assisting the training of the Merit staff. We also transferred a key Glenigan employee to Merit and deployed the employee into the operational base in India

Service Quality

It was essential that the outsourced service did not diminish the volume and depth of the research that was being generated locally. Which would effect customer loyalty and renewal rates. This was mitigated in a number of ways:

-  Key Merit staff members initially worked in the local office for several weeks to undergo the best possible training experience and to undertake live research under the guidance of experienced personnel.
-  Glenigan staff were deployed to Merits operational base for several weeks both at the beginning and end of the transition process, to underpin and reinforce the conventional training phase of the transition.
-  Merit and Glenigan worked to develop a scoring mechanism which was (and is) applied to large samples of the Merit work.
-  Glenigan review large samples of records from Merit QC staff to help guide the Merit QC process and to help ensure its overall integrity
-  Merit 'TUPED' across a Glenigan staff member to work on a permanent basis in Merit.

Transferring the Process to Merit

The transfer process was transferred over a four month process and governed by a project plan which was developed by Merit and which covered the three main areas of transitioning this particular project

In order to mitigate the risks outlined above and overcome the challenges facing the client, Merit set up and transitioned the project in the following way.



Service Quality

Staff Training was driven by a number of Merit agents who spent several weeks at the client local office. These agents received the highest degree of training possible and who also undertook extensive live calling under local supervision.

The team was managed by a Western merit manager who supervised and led the training component in the wider team in Chennai. The deployment of a dedicated trainer and the time spent in the UK was a worthwhile investment in terms of de-risking the project and ensuring a higher level of service quality.



Technology Rollout

To facilitate the delivery of services from Chennai, we chose to implement a dedicated private circuit through which Merit agents would securely access Glenigan systems in Bournemouth.

This approach was validated by testing system access over conventional broad band circuits which was successful and proved the concept. The private circuit installation for improved speed (and additional security) was a difficult process, but in addition to establishing the connectivity, we were also able to encompass additional emap sites in this stage.



Supervised Calling: Quality Reviews & Reporting

Merit initially allocated and trained an additional 20% of staff (over and above what had been agreed between the partners) to cover for absence and to enable us to select the best agents for this project. Emphasis was initially on the quality of the agent calling and research notes, before we looked to drive higher levels of productivity.

This was a slower approach and meant that productivity levels were lower than normal for a number of weeks, but the fall off was not severe and Merit was positioned to then exceed productivity targets whilst holding strong levels of quality.

Benefits Arising to the Client

1

Glenigan now have a flexible resource fully established offshore which is generating data on a consistent basis.

2

The company has been able to generate significant savings on the cost of undertaking this research.

3

The newly established team can now be restructured to work with the original data processing teams in Merit, to enable faster turnaround times on project data. Quicker turnaround times are a distinct advantage over competing products in this area and one that has been strengthened by working in partnership with Merit.

4

Management has freed up additional time and resources to drive new project initiatives at this time. Whilst managing the performance of the outsourced partner requires a certain level of resource, there is a reduced focus on HR, Training, Staff Management, IT etc.





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