

CASE STUDY

A Lesson in Reducing Compliance Costs at the University of Bristol

In 2008, the University of Bristol Estates Department commenced a project to implement the eSquiggles data collection software to better manage paperwork and reports generated during statutory compliance related testing, inspections and reactive maintenance tasks. The time and costs of completing jobs across the multi-site campus were very high and a more efficient way of working was needed. Used initially for legionella risk assessments, the system has now been rolled out to manage the process in a number of key areas including waste management, fire alarm testing, appliance testing and lift maintenance. The introduction of eSquiggles has led to significant cost and time savings, which are set to increase further.



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. The associated costs of storing volumes of 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 this 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”, 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 risk assessment reports and documentation, which can be produced automatically and populated with the data collected on the PDA.

Key Uses

- » Legionella Risk Assessments
- » Health & safety
- » Waste management
- » PAT & fixed appliance testing
- » Fire alarms
- » Lift maintenance
- » Emergency lighting
- » Asset Tracking

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

CASE STUDY

Reducing the Costs of Compliance

The success of phase one paved the way for phase two which went live in Autumn 2010. eSquiggles is now an enabler in meeting sustainability objectives and provides an efficient process for the management of waste, bins and incineration units. The Estates Department is also responsible for the maintenance of a large number of other assets including portable appliances, fixed appliances, emergency lighting, fire alarms, lifts, air conditioning units, etc..

Kevin explains, "eSquiggles provides a more effect approach of 'plan, measure, control' to ensure assets are maintained within legislative guidelines and meeting statutory compliance requirements. The recurring job scheduling features ensure we have an efficient plan in place to test the equipment on the required time cycle. A number of appliance tests and maintenance tasks are performed by external contractors, which has the potential to be very time consuming, however the reporting features of eSquiggles means that we can view data at any time relating to any contractor or any set of assets to ensure we are always fully compliant. As you can imagine, with over 400 buildings we have a huge number of assets and now having a fully automated process for asset management and electronic auditing has improved working practices enormously. We will soon be publishing all of our asset "logbooks" on the university intranet to provide complete transparency for all interested parties."

Electronic Records - Existing Documentation Templates

With members of staff of all ages and technical abilities, there was an initial nervousness around the new technology, however following some basic training the team was up and running with eSquiggles with very few problems. eSquiggles is one of few systems which can use an organisation's existing templates, meaning that forms completed on the PDA and reports generated after the inspections can mirror existing templates, which maintains an element of familiarity for users.

"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", 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 cost savings."

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. As soon as the project commenced we were thinking of other ways in which it could be used and the system has proven its flexibility in doing so. The ease of 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 system and it underpins our strategy in moving forward."

