

Deltascheme and Places for People bring consistency to health & safety with SharePoint

The multiple and diverse businesses of the Places for People Group now have a flexible and consistent approach to health & safety reporting that encompasses remote workers and is designed to easily incorporate future acquisitions.

Places for People is a diverse group of businesses that all have property at their heart. Ranging from market rent, affordable and supported housing through construction to leisure centres, the Group's businesses own or manage over 180,000 properties and have assets of over £3.1b.



The challenge

Places for People is a complex and fluid organisation that is regularly changing shape as it acquires or sells businesses. As a result there has been a need to improve central oversight and data collection and analysis to ensure high standards of health & safety are maintained. With the Group Board pressing for continuous improvement, this needed to be addressed.

The health & safety team went out to market to find a solution that could meet all the Group's needs. It had to be capable of collecting information about incidents and activities while being flexible enough to apply to any of the businesses. The comprehensive requirement list ranged from risk assessment, audits and inspections through the capturing and investigating of incidents to reporting on action plans that deliver continuous improvement.

The solution would also provide a communications portal at Group and business unit level. It would need to provide for online and offline use for site based and mobile staff, on desktop and mobile devices.

This requirements list was further complicated by the fact that not all the businesses were on the group network, with several running their own independent systems.

The solution

Despite an in-depth search of the market Places for People was unable to find an off-the-shelf solution that met the requirements. One particular stumbling block was that the health & safety team wanted a system that enabled as much in-house control as possible and the ability to carry out as much future development as possible in-house. Most off-the-shelf solutions did not offer this degree of flexibility, which meant Places for People would have to pay for many changes to be made.

At the 11th hour, colleagues suggested that the health & safety team look at Microsoft SharePoint, which was already being used for document management in other parts of the Group, and was familiar to many users as a result.

As a first step the health & safety team visited a current SharePoint user, the Canal and River Trust. *"It felt like a Eureka moment,"* says Gavin Scollen, Group Head of Health & Safety at Places for People. Excited by what they saw, the team set up a meeting with Microsoft Gold Partner, Deltascheme, who were already working with Places for People's ICT team to implement SharePoint and Nintex across the Group.

The first step was for the health & safety team to sit down with Deltascheme to discuss requirements and create a specification. The process was hugely productive according to Gavin, with Deltascheme drawing on its experience to suggest new ways of looking at the challenge and explaining how the technology could not just deliver the solution but offer bonus capabilities for an even better experience.

"Dealing with someone who spoke our language built our confidence in Deltascheme," says Gavin. *"They didn't talk like salespeople, and we were able to form the foundation of a productive and trusting relationship very quickly."*

Working together, Places for People and Deltascheme agreed a solution that would be built on the current Places for People platform of SharePoint and Nintex, which provides workflow and electronic forms.

The proposed solution made extensive use of flexible functionality available within the SharePoint and Nintex platform, such as SharePoint pages, document libraries and lists, as well as Nintex Forms, Mobile, Live and Workflow, plus SQL Reporting Services for KPIs and drill-downs. On top of that Deltascheme provided bespoke code for external interfaces, data aggregation and

customer HTML pages. They also configured the platform as an extranet, allowing business units that are not yet part of the Group's IT infrastructure to connect.

Deltascheme provided a full software development suite of services, including requirements gather, design, build, test, handover with training and demonstrations, and support.

Benefits

By applying consistency in the way information is collected, the health & safety team is finally able to take a view of detailed activity right across the Group. Having spent the last ten years trying to collect information where they can, the team can now access information they need to monitor what's happening and ensure appropriate actions are being taken. At the same time, newly acquired businesses can be placed on the system from day one, giving them access to Group health & safety standards and allowing Group oversight of their health and safety performance.

With the SharePoint solution comes improved remote access. "Users on site often have little access to wifi, but now they can work offline and send data back to the system once they're online again. This is an aspect of the solution that the off-the-shelf solutions struggle with," says Gavin.

The team is taking advantage of SharePoint's strengths in document management to bring consistency to its health and safety standards. Group standards have been re-written to apply to all businesses and have been loaded onto the system. Below those Group standards each business will find its own specific procedures.

"Our aim is to provide a one-stop shop for all health & safety information. The solution is not just about monitoring past incidents. I believe in pushing the boundaries of health & safety. By creating dashboards with SharePoint we are now going beyond reacting to incidents to identifying areas where we can improve proactively," says Gavin.

The dashboards are being developed by a Places for People team member who has received the skills he needs from Deltascheme to configure the system against the Group KPIs.

Deltascheme's willingness to transfer skills is helping Places for People to take advantage of the flexibility of the solution without incurring additional development costs. Overall costs are further contained because the Group already runs SharePoint and Nintex, so for the health & safety team there are no further licences fees to fund. Off-the-shelf solutions attract considerable annual license fees.

Places for People is rolling out the solution module by module. Six months in, anecdotal feedback has been very positive, and a more formal survey after six months will analyse reactions further. In the meantime the team is using the Basecamp programme to enable users to feed back comments less formally. "We're listening to the businesses, making sure we respond and making changes where we need to," reports Gavin.

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All the Deltascheme people are very professional with a great attitude. They are a first-class company and have been great project partners”

Gavin Scollen

Group Head of Health & Safety, Places for People

About Deltascheme

Deltascheme is a leading provider of business and technical consultancy for Electronic Content Management and Business Process Management solutions based on Microsoft technologies.

Established in 1986, Deltascheme have consistently delivered best-of-breed technologies and proven solutions in answer to the growing business needs of their customers. To find out more about Deltascheme go online to:

www.deltascheme.com.