



AT A GLANCE



Recreational Services

INDUSTRY

Facilities Management

BUSINESS OBJECTIVE

- Automate documentation accompanying service requests
- Eliminate manual processes and email forms
- Improve information visibility

SOLUTION

- Web service API integration with Flow Software

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Manual form-filling eliminated
- Time saved by removing data entry
- Ease of work in progress reporting

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Flow Software

W: www.flowsoftware.com

E: info@flowsoftware.com

T: +64 9 476 3569

Recreational Services makes Christchurch parks greener with data automation

Written in September 2106 by Flow Software

WINNING A TENDER TO PROVIDE FULL FACILITIES MAINTENANCE SERVICES FOR CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL HAS HAD AN ADDED BENEFIT FOR RECREATIONAL SERVICES...

As part of the contract, the green spaces specialist was required to integrate its business management systems with those of its new client - and as a result, new horizons have opened up in terms of the possibilities for process automation and integration.

It chose Flow Software to provide the technology and expertise for the integration, and today enjoys seamless interaction with Christchurch City Council's (CCC) SAP ERP system.

Founded in 1992 and known as 'the parks people', Recreational Services is a family-owned business which employs over 450 staff members nationwide. The company grew from specialising in golf-turf, to becoming New Zealand's leading provider of turf, parks and facilities management.

Recreational Services' specialist teams provide turf, horticultural and asset management services to councils, schools, golf courses and public parks and gardens across New Zealand.

Situation

IT manager Denis Djohar says that with an established North Island presence, Recreational Services was looking to grow its activity in the South. "To do that, we tendered for and won a contract with CCC to take care of the City's parks management. Part of that contract was a requirement for B2B integration, as the Council needed to have records of jobs requested and completed coming from and going straight back into its ERP system from our own one."

Denis notes that there is usually a lot of email traffic 'to and fro' as Recreational Services manages its activities which includes keeping parks, fields and open spaces tidy and maintained. "We could definitely see the advantages of an integrated, automated system, though we hadn't yet had a requirement for it."

Solution

CCC had just stood up a web service application programming interface (API) on its side and Recreation Services required technology and expertise to establish its own web service API to interact with that of the Council.

With this integration as a requirement, the company sought a solution. "Being aware of Flow Software through an associate, we contacted Flow first; however, we also looked at other options," Denis relates.

Recreational Services, he explains, uses a proprietary business management system called MENZIT. With the Flow product, Recreational Services was able to expose its data through a web service and interact with CCC's web service, to exchange Jobs, Claims, Reference and Asset data.

This information is integrated into the SQL backend at MENZIT. This process enabled Recreational Services to be among the first suppliers to start consuming CCC's web service.

Denis says the functional specification released by CCC provided the necessary clarity and the build was achieved as the result of collaboration between his own team and Flow Software. "The development process took around two to three months all the way through to testing," he notes. "This was our first integration, so there was some learning required, but with the experience of the vendor, it didn't present any difficulty."



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Results

The best way to evaluate the benefit of the integration between its systems and those of CCC, says Denis, is by comparison with how Recreational Services continues to work with its other clients. "The old way of working requires a lot of emails and forms. We get a request for work needed in a particular location, which is an emailed form. We manually enter that into our system, and send it back."

This process requires double-entry of information, takes time, and is potentially error-prone. "There's a lot of back and forth and each time, it takes up people's time and that incurs a cost."

With the Flow system facilitating direct communications, Denis says all of that falls away. Work requests arrive in Recreational Services' system automatically, the company's operatives are assigned their tasks and the completion of the jobs on sites is verified electronically. "There is no need for anyone at Council to ring us up, no need for any exchange of email or other information - it just happens. That's a big time saver for all concerned."

"There is also no longer any need to produce status and work in progress reports, because these are all tracked by the system and are available at any time."

Tellingly, Denis says the success of the Flow integration is such that Recreational Services is looking at using the process as an additional feature of the services it offers clients. "Flow provides digital enablement; it delivers efficiency. And it just works really well," he concludes.

For more information about Flow Integration & EDI Solutions

Call: +64 9 476 3569
Email: info@flowsoftware.com
Visit: www.flowsoftware.com



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