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Turner & Townsend

making the **difference**

Integrated systems: the art of the possible

Ashley Prail, global head of programme management office, shares his experiences of how to get the most from technology in asset construction

Integrated systems are a great enabler in meeting the increasing demands of cost and schedule certainty. They also enable a better understanding and therefore management of risk. Many of Turner & Townsend's clients have invested heavily in systems to support their programmes and want support in achieving the hoped for business benefits. Others look to organisations like ourselves to deliver these systems as part of our service (often for a fraction of the cost).

During the course of the last five years of working with hundreds of businesses across a range of major programmes, we have developed our own view of what "good" looks like. And it doesn't have to cost the earth.

Our strategy is to have deep knowledge in these systems and find ways to help our clients gain more value from their deployment

Buy don't make

Our first golden rule is to buy core functionality and not develop it. We are not a software house. Our business differentiator is to be deeply skilled in the tools of choice of our clients. A number of years ago we became a "consulting partner" with Primavera and we have maintained this relationship, delivering consulting, accredited training and implementations to a number of our clients.

Similarly, we have had longstanding relationships with Kildrummy and Causeway in respect of their market-leading cost management software and more recently we have been developing strong ties with RIB for their best in class estimating management software. These are just three of the growing number of applications we maintain consulting capability in. Our strategy is to have deep knowledge in these systems and find ways to help our clients gain more value from their deployment.

The whole is greater than the sum of the parts

Integration is key. Integration is highly value adding and is where we can bring real differentiation. Without exception, everyone we talk to wants "a single source of truth". They want confidence that their report information is consistent, valid and properly checked. They want large quantities of data, originating in a number of systems to be quickly collated and presented. They also recognise that their "data" has real value provided it is coded and structured correctly – and that this data can be used to drive performance improvement at a programme and business level.

We see a trend of larger organisations investing heavily in integration kits and "middleware" databases that can be used to drive reporting and feed data into corporate financial systems. Our aim is to have the skills to help organisations achieve this, or provide our own toolkit (IntegraTTe) that delivers 80% of "bluechip" functionality at less than 20% of the cost.

We believe that reporting must focus on the measures that matter, they must be "attention grabbing" and they must include analysis

Great systems don't make great reports

We see report production almost becoming an industry in itself. We have so much data and such clever systems, but our reporting has got worse – how can this be? Because we have lost focus. Because we aren't setting the test and asking "is this report driving the desired action?"

We believe that reporting must focus on the measures that matter, they must be "attention grabbing" and they must include analysis. Otherwise all the investment in systems, data collection and report production is highly sub-optimal. Our aim is to help clients maximise the benefit from the investment they have already made rather than buy more systems. Thinking about where performance risks lie, what measures will help us identify performance trends as early as possible and how this data can be best represented is time very well spent.

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www.turnerandtowntsend.com

PS – don't forget your supply chain

I worked on a project in the early days of major project software systems where somebody thought it was a great idea to integrate all contractors' schedules into a single 55,000 activity network. Nightmare! Just because you can get all the data into a single system doesn't make it a good idea, and frequently more data will mean less control and more risk.

We advocate major projects and programmes have a proper information management strategy so you fully understand how you want to capture and integrate suppliers data, what you want to leave in their systems, what you want to automate into your own systems and how you want to capture data from the suppliers at a level that will inform future estimating and bench-marking. Businesses are investing a huge amount of money in the gathering and reporting of all this data – our aim is to make sure that value for money from this endeavour is maximised.

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