

Case Study: The Post Office



The Post Office provides a wide range of products and services to the public. Through its UK-wide network of more than 11,000 post office branches, Post Office provides a local service to communities, including mail services, banking services, savings products, telephony, insurance and financial services, and bill payments.

About the Client

Post Office Ltd is Europe's largest retailer and the largest financial services chain in the UK, providing a wide range of products and services to the public and is 100 percent owned by UK Government. Through its UK-wide network of more than 11,000 post office branches, Post Office provides a local service to communities, including mail services, financial services, telephony services, and Government services on behalf of UK Borders Agency, DVLA, the Environment Agency and Local Government.

In 2012, UK Government announced the IPO of Royal Mail Group, with Post Office remaining in public ownership. This required Post Office to separate from its parent company and to commence operating as an independent company in its own right but to continue to act as an agent for Royal Mail in postal services. All shared services, from IT to Facilities Management, were to be separated, established or sourced. It was to be a mammoth task, and one of the first services to be separated was Procurement.

The Requirement: To set up a strategic sourcing platform and transfer data from the legacy system

A crucial part of this separation was to implement a whole suite of strategic sourcing solutions for its business-critical

procurement activity. The requirement was to set up and integrate a new system and transfer all contract data from the legacy system. Having previously been part of a centralised operation, the separation gave the procurement team a chance to take a good look at what it really needed. Sujai Jayaram, Procurement Best Practice Lead, has responsibility for the overall delivery of the new system. It is his job to ensure that standard operating procedures, reporting and benchmarking systems are in place, and that sourcing managers are working to best practice methods aligned to company procedures. "We recognised that we did not need the same scale of system that Royal Mail had used," he said. "We needed something more suitable for the size of our business as we are subject to a different regulatory regime. It was time to take stock of our own requirements."

It would be a period of significant change and, given the sensitivity of some of its data, not without risk. The Post Office sought an experienced supply management provider with in-house technology, professional services and category expertise that could deliver within a determined timeframe. It chose BravoSolution.

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BravoSolution - the provider of choice

Sara Hollingsbee, Best Practice Procurement Manager, is responsible for the solution implementation process.

“We looked at several other providers on the GPS G-Cloud Framework, but were impressed with the capability of the BravoSolution suite; we discovered that BravoSolution is a market-leading, best practice tool that is being used extensively across the public sector and this gave us confidence that it would meet our needs.”

“We set out a specification against which we measured each potential provider,” continued Sujai. “We built this by talking with our own procurement team to understand what they needed



from the system. We wanted to make sure we could deliver this in a professional manner. Although a list of requirements can be very black and white, BravoSolution came back to us with a very un-black-and-white solution. They presented us with a selection of offerings from which we could cherry pick the best for our needs.”

The Solution:

A tailored, department-wide sourcing solution and strategic advice

With a ‘doing-more-for-less’ objective sweeping the public sector today, the Post Office, like any other public sector organisation, is under pressure to deliver more savings than ever before. BravoSolution implemented a complete suite of tools that would manage vendors and their performance, supplier relationships, eTendering, contracts, spend analysis and the strategic sourcing process more efficiently and, importantly, cost-effectively. “The Strategic Sourcing Suite offered the right mix of functionality and value for money,” said Sujai. “We wanted to achieve greater efficiency, so we needed a tool that would enable our Sourcing Managers to operate more effectively and be easy to use for the whole department. Complete visibility across all projects is critical for us, the BravoSolution Strategic Sourcing Suite gives everyone access to the same accurate, up-to-date information, regardless of location.”

BravoSolution is well placed in having sole ownership of its software development, consultancy service and support. Using no third-party resource means it can offer a truly comprehensive service. “Setting out on a completely new path, we didn’t know exactly what we needed,” explained Sujai, “but we did understand our vision. By working closely with us, BravoSolution was able to advise us on the best way to achieve it. It is the company’s consultative approach that gets you what you really need. The consultants didn’t just take what we said at face-value, they immersed themselves in our activities and really got to grips with our business drivers.”

The BravoSolution team paid close attention to each requirement, no matter the size, and tailored the system accordingly. Sara gave an example: “One of Post Office’s challenges was to keep the new procurement system generic, while making it look and feel like Post Office software. The old system previously provided by

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Group Procurement had a mix of Procurement and Royal Mail acronyms which, while recognised within, had no meaning outside the Group. BravoSolution was able to take this back to basics and use generic terminology that would be familiar to all internal users, future bidders and existing suppliers. We also work with people in the supply chain who are unfamiliar with procurement systems and sometimes the process, so it was imperative for us that it was made as clear as possible, and we achieved this with BravoSolution.”

Solid Relationships make for successful Implementation

From day one, BravoSolution made sure that the implementation teams were introduced and fully understood the requirement. It believes strongly in nurturing good relationships as the basis for successful delivery and post-implementation support.

“BravoSolution made us feel fully engaged right from the start,” said Sara. “We were introduced to our consultants and our Engagement Director, who became a key person in our team and with whom we built a good understanding and solid relationship.”

We were very impressed that BravoSolution offers this kind of support: going through a large and complex transformation process, involving many different systems and people, it is encouraging and comforting to know you have someone who remains a constant throughout the entire process and beyond.”

During implementation the two teams worked closely and consistently together. “The role of our engagement director was not just that of programme manager, ensuring we hit milestones, she was a key point of contact that made the transition from



phase to phase a smooth process for both parties,” Sara continued. “When it came to configuring our e-tendering module for example, I would be working with one set of colleagues. When we moved on to work on our spend analysis modules, I would be working with a different team, but at each stage of implementation our engagement director made sure there was a consistent transferral of skill and knowledge and importantly, that we all became familiar with each other. What is different about BravoSolution is that it gave us a consistent point of contact, and it works.”

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Sujai remarked: “The team was always available to us, the consultants were very personable, easy to approach and highly responsive to our needs. We felt the way the whole account management was delivered in an excellent manner; it was geared around treating us in a very personal way.”

Results that last:

An independent system installed to requirements and ahead of schedule

Implementation was scheduled for an eight-month period; six months in it is already 80 percent complete. “I am happy to say that we are on track to deliver ahead of schedule. In any implementation there will undoubtedly be some level of disruption. It is common to try things out to see if they work. What we found really positive about the BravoSolution approach is the lack of experimentation – they focus more on getting it right first time,” said Sujai.

“We are already operating independently of our legacy system. Our replacement is in situ and we continue to enhance it to our needs. All our information is in one place, accurate and current. We have started to take stock of our projects, have visibility across them and understand our resource plan. This has huge efficiency added value for us, and in that alone we have met our objective.”

BravoSolution will stay with the procurement team throughout the project lifecycle and provide ongoing support thereafter.

“BravoSolution has delivered on its sales promise. It has been particularly good at communicating regularly, and has taken control of the project.

On other projects I have led, I have often felt that it was down to me to drive the team and work to meet the timescales and if I missed these they wouldn't be met; but BravoSolution has driven it and supported us throughout to make it happen, truly sharing the delivery responsibility,” said Sara.

The next step is for BravoSolution to integrate the e-sourcing system with back-office systems. “This will put our data into a more valuable format for our category managers and that will enable better, informed decision making. The business has all its systems to migrate, but procurement is helping the business transformation by leading the way. BravoSolution has set the framework against which to base all our operational procedures.”

The retail sector is changing rapidly into a demand-side, multi-channel environment, and the Post Office is keeping apace with that change. With new, independent systems in place, it is becoming more efficient, effective and fit for tomorrow's purpose.

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