

Newport City Council Simplifies Content Management and Improves Constituent Service



Newport City Council
Newport, South Wales
www.newport.gov.uk

Industry:

Public Sector

Annual Revenue:

US\$597.7 million

Employees:

7,000

Oracle Products & Services:

Oracle Universal Content
Management

Key Benefits:

- Improved customer service by giving call center agents access to an extensive knowledge base
- Decreased time needed to resolve call center inquiries
- Standardized content management, improving consistency of information
- Reduced time and resources necessary for call center and Web self-service system management

"The knowledge base we have created using Oracle Universal Content Management is an integral part of our contact center. Without this, the contact center would not have been able to function due to the large number of services that we provide to citizens." – Mark Bleazard, Information Systems Consultant, Newport City Council

One of the persistent challenges facing local authorities is the variety and scope of services offered to residents and businesses. This puts huge demands on public sector organizations to provide fast and accurate access to information. Newport City Council, the eighth largest authority in Wales, provides a variety of services such as education, leisure, housing, social services, planning, and highways.

In addition to using traditional channels, such as face-to-face and telephone communications, to inform residents and businesses about these services, Newport City Council was keen to maximize the information available to residents and businesses online. To do this, the council realized it needed a content management system to improve the way it managed and published documents. The system also needed to provide a comprehensive knowledge base to enable council employees in the contact center to effectively deal with all customer inquiries.

In 2000, Newport City Council implemented Oracle Universal Content Management, previously called Stellent Universal Content Management, to enable its Web team to contribute content easily and quickly to the intranet and internet.

Since implementation in November 2000, the council has built up its use of Oracle Universal Content Management to publish online all job advertisements and descriptions, various policies and procedures, planning and strategy documents, and press releases.

In March 2003, Newport City Council decided to open a contact center to process all calls in an efficient and coordinated manner through one single telephone number. Given the large number of services Newport City Council offers, it needed to find a way to

ensure that its call center agents had the right reference information to handle any inquiries quickly and effectively. This would shorten call times, reduce staffing needs, and improve front-line service delivery.

Call Center Knowledge Base Improves Service

The council used Oracle Universal Content Management to develop a “knowledge base” that allows call center agents to search for a particular subject and respond quickly to citizens’ queries using information located in this central repository. Both these systems are under constant review to ensure that the information held, and the way it is structured, remains relevant and up-to-date at all times. The council has trained staff and held events to encourage them to contribute to the maintenance process and to publicize the benefits of the new system.

“The knowledge base we created using Oracle is an integral part of our contact center. Without this, the contact center would not have been able to function due to the large number of services that we provide to citizens,” explained Mark Bleazard, information systems consultant, Newport City Council.

By using Oracle, Bleazard said that access to council services has improved. The council resolves call center queries far more quickly and efficiently than before. This has made end users happier and freed-up staff to concentrate on those areas of service delivery that require specialist knowledge.

One Content Management Tool Maintains Consistency

The success of the intranet, internet, and contact center rollouts mean that Newport City Council is now looking to create a complete Oracle environment for content management across the authority. Having just one single tool in place across the organization will ensure consistency of services. It will also make it easier for the council to upgrade its systems as well as integrate them seamlessly with other back-office tools and applications.

Simplified Management Saves Time and Resources

Furthermore, the council continues to increase the number of documents available online, offering individuals a choice in how they access services. Oracle has also made it possible for Newport City Council to manage both contact center customer service information and Web self-service information as a single unit,

reducing the time and resources taken to manage separate versions.

System Offers Opportunities for Growth

Following the successful roll-out of these services, Newport City Council is now looking for other areas where it can leverage its partnership with Oracle to support its drive toward fulfilling the e-government initiative and improving its offering to the community. Future plans include using Oracle to help the council streamline its planning application process by making information available online to both citizens and council staff. The council also plans to use Oracle to scan and store the reams of traditional paper-based documents that it currently stores within its offices.

By moving its planning application information and systems online, Newport City Council intends to make the often lengthy and frustrating process far easier for both citizens and council staff to manage. Users will be able to submit and access key documentation online. Interested parties will be able to track application progress via the Web without needing to go to council offices in person. This will free up planning staff's time as well as make the storage and retrieval of information far more efficient.

Similarly, by using Oracle in the future to scan and archive the vast quantities of paper-based information held by the council, it will become far easier to access relevant information quickly. This will free up huge amounts of physical storage space that can then be used for other purposes.

Another potential future use for the Oracle system is to integrate the contact center knowledge base into the council's walk-in centers to speed up processes. This will ensure that information and services are fully linked-up between every end-user touch point.

Why Oracle?

Newport City Council looked at a number of vendors before deciding on Oracle. It selected Oracle because the solution included the needed functionality. The council appreciates the support received from Oracle throughout the implementation.

“We really feel that Oracle is supporting us in our endeavors and are using them wherever we can to help us achieve our e-government objectives,” Bleazard said.

Implementation Process

The Oracle rollout has so far required very little integration between Oracle Universal Content Management and other applications. By creating a single Oracle environment across all Newport City Council systems, the council intends to ensure that its systems remain easy-to-use and that they can encompass any future requirements.

The council will use the contact center and intranet/internet work as best practice case studies for the rest of the organization to use. The proposed planning application project will serve as a model that the council hopes other parts of the organization—such as social services—will follow.

Newport City Council is a unitary authority formed in 1996, and is the eighth largest in Wales, providing all major services such as education, leisure, housing, social services, planning, and highways. It consists of 50 counselors and the mayor, who is elected by order of seniority and holds office for one year.