

Bell International learns to be efficient with Dream

BELL INTERNATIONAL turned to Dream from CODA to help it automate previously paper-intensive processes – and the organization has now reduced costs by a third.



Financial Management

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One of the largest British-owned providers of English language and teacher training courses, Bell International is an international training organization with four intensive training centres in the UK and more than 20 partner centres throughout Europe and in Asia. Bell have been using Dream from CODA since 1998 and have upgraded several times, most recently to version 3 at the end of last year.

GROWING DEMAND FOR COST CONTROL AND TRANSPARENCY

CODA's applications are ideally suited to the rapidly changing world of Education. In a sector that faces greater financial and commercial pressures than ever before, many establishments find that their current applications are no longer meeting the growing demands placed upon them – especially in the areas of cost control and making commercial performance more transparent.

The first version of Dream was put in place alongside an upgrade of Bell's network infrastructure, and its implementation was one of the first tasks for Financial Accountant John Daniels when he joined the organisation. John describes the situation prior to installation: "Before Dream, AS400 was being used, and many processes were carried out using Microsoft Access. It wasn't a very user-friendly system and AS400 only really operated as an anchor between the other systems in place."

MINIMAL TRAINING, MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY

The Dream system is now used by six finance staff within Bell Educational Trust. Designed by accountants for accountants, with highly intuitive, easy-to-use systems and interfaces, input of data is easy, swift and accurate. "The design of input forms in Dream makes it easy to understand and requires minimal training for new staff," notes John. "The system is very efficient and stable, we have never had a problem with it."

Dream is a unified ledger system designed to enable finance departments to track, manage and report on a broad spectrum of financial parameters. Bell uses Dream for nominal, purchase, commission, debtors and fixed assets ledgers. It also, as John explains, has a specific

ledger to accommodate payments made to local accommodation providers by students attending courses, which was easy to set up in Dream and was customised to meet Bell's own requirements.

PROCESS AUTOMATION SAVES TIME AND MONEY

The Dream system also enables time and cost savings by automating existing processes: "Before the system was implemented, we had reams of paperwork for year end and that all disappeared after it was put in place. Each VAT return took one day to do and had a file of paperwork for it. It has all improved dramatically", comments John. Dream is designed to minimise manual re-keying of data through its unified ledger architecture.

Easy interfacing of Dream with other key applications and systems can deliver rapid returns on investment by improving efficiency, generating cost savings and enabling departments to provide better customer service to students. John elaborates: "Dream integrates with our registration system for taking bookings and invoicing, so that information is sent from that system and updated directly in Dream. It also links with our payroll system and BACS payments are easily made directly from Dream."

Dream has certainly paid off in terms of efficiency savings and offering value for money for The Bell Educational Trust. John notes: "Before Dream, we were carrying out the same financial functions as we are now with nine members of staff and one to manage the payroll, except that now we need only six in the finance department including payroll processing."

Non-financial managers have access to Crystal reports set up to run from Dream, and can access monthly reports at a high level. Individual managers can also access accounts for their department and analyze spend under every heading. This means all decision makers and budget holders have access to the financial information they need when they need it. John explains how this saves the finance team time from answering queries as "managers can drill down to get full details for themselves; they don't need to ask the finance department for this information. Another benefit is that it is all done in real time so we know the information we are working from is current and accurate."

THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT

With the latest upgrade to version 3 recently up and running, John and his colleagues at The Bell Educational Trust are making the most of the new features: "The system has got better and better over the years. The latest upgrade has the budget in the same database as the costs, so it's very straightforward."

Bells' future plans include a move to integrate documents such as purchase invoicing into the system, which should lead to a reduction in requirements for storage space. There's also the option of linking Dream to an online payments mechanism, although the complexities of creating a booking system which is able to accommodate classes made up of a mix of students from different nationalities means this will be a challenge! Of the Dream system, however, John concludes, "the most important thing is that it does everything we want it to do".



About CODA

CODA is the choice for finance professionals who need business software and services they can count on.



We provide award-winning Financial Management solutions that help organizations to streamline and automate their finance processes (from accounting and procurement to reporting and analysis) and to achieve better compliance and corporate governance. CODA applications work seamlessly with each other or independently and they integrate with other leading operational systems to maximize the return on your broader IT investment too. And our products are all underpinned by expert consultancy, training and support services, delivered by teams of experienced accountants, business analysts and technology specialists.

Founded in the UK in 1979, the CODA Group now employs more than 550 people and has offices around the world to deliver easy, local access to sales, service and support. Around 2600 medium and large organizations, across all sectors, use CODA solutions to control costs, drive performance and ensure compliance, while remaining agile and responsive.