

Case Study: Whitfield Group

WHITFIELD

GROUP



Whitfield Group proves the ideal home for LandMark and Dream - the integrated solution ensures complex property management and accounts are aligned

The Whitfield Group is a family-run property business providing residential accommodation for students and professionals, and commercial space for businesses.

Established some forty years ago with the purchase and conversion of a single property, which the company still holds, the group now manages a portfolio worth around £75 million from its head offices near Cambridge, and has some 650 tenants. With residential accommodation mostly concentrated in the Cambridge and Chelmsford areas, and commercial property interests across the UK, Whitfield continues to add to its portfolio through a construction arm which acquires and refurbishes new accommodation for the group.

AN INTEGRATED, ADAPTABLE SOLUTION

Whitfield had struggled for some time to find a suitable integrated property management and accounting system that could meet its needs. It installed a new system in 2003, but quickly found the application couldn't cope with the group's complex accounting processes. *"Because of our construction arm, we have five different levels of VAT across the various companies in the group,"* explains Steve Taylor, Whitfield's Commercial Property Manager. *"We had to do our VAT processing manually, and, inevitably, the process fell down on a number of occasions."*

According to Steve, Whitfield wanted *"a new system that would be flexible enough to support the way we worked, rather than forcing us to adapt and which was accounts-led rather than just having good support for property management"*. The new system also needed to be extremely user-friendly, as all of Whitfield's 15 head office staff and team of 20 local maintenance and support staff would be making use of it.

After undertaking an exhaustive review of the market, Whitfield chose the combination of Hexagon's LandMark property management system integrated with the Dream finance system from CODA.

Alongside the core property management and financials solutions, Whitfield also implemented Hexagon's HelpDesk module and the Dream Purchase Order module.





Steve said *“The real time integration of LandMark, Dream and HelpDesk creates a powerful business tool which is used by all departments of the company from front line maintenance through to total property management and management accounting. The combination of the products allows a flexible and controllable approach for all employees to enhance the performance of the ever expanding portfolio.”*

EFFICIENCY ACROSS THE BUSINESS

The real-time integration between all the different elements has eliminated the re-keying of data and provided significant benefits for the Whitfield Group. Steve explains *“It saves time and reduces errors, for instance, we can enter a new tenant onto LandMark and the details are automatically brought over into Dream. When our maintenance staff enter their timesheets, costs are immediately allocated to the right project codes and nominal codes, while the system generates data for our external payroll provider. It is an extremely efficient system. Additionally, month-end processes and VAT returns have been greatly simplified. Our previous system simply couldn't handle our complex VAT returns and we had to do them through spreadsheets. It used to take us three or four days to sort out. Now it takes just an hour or two to run the reports.”*

REAL-TIME INFORMATION DELIVERED TO ALL USERS

Managers also have better access to more up-to-date information on properties, projects and activities. *“Our biggest headache now is working out how much management information we want to hold,”* Taylor admits. *“Because LandMark and Dream can handle data at such a detailed level, we need to determine the right balance between having that information and the time and cost of updating it.”*

CONFIDENCE IN SUPPLIERSUPPORTS FUTURE AMBITION

The next stage for the company is to use the LandMark and Dream combination as the core for its plans for a paperless office. Linking tenant records on the systems with documents such as tenancy agreements and credit checks is a testament to Hexagon's ability to deliver on its promises.

Steve concludes:

“Hexagon have risen to the challenge and instilled huge confidence in us during the installation process. Without a doubt, one of the biggest assets has been Hexagon's responsiveness and commitment to us.”

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ABOUT HEXAGON

The Hexagon Software Group was formed in 1973 and focuses on the supply of specialist property management software designed for Owner/Investors and Managing Agents. As an accredited Coda Partner, Hexagon is responsible for the supply, implementation and support of CODA-Dream in the property sector. The combined expertise enables Hexagon to deliver and support one of the best and most versatile Property Management solutions on the market today.

ABOUT LANDMARK

In the highly competitive property market, the key to success lies in the intimate understanding of a property portfolio. LandMark has the ability to assess and analyse subtle changes in the market and access to up-to-the-minute management information. Hexagon's LandMark provides the tools needed to actively manage a portfolio, presenting an efficient, effective and reliable management resource.

ABOUT DREAM

Dream is a “best of class” unified Ledger accounting system. It was created by CODA as a dedicated financial software solution that integrates easily with other business systems. It was designed to cover a wider range of accounting functions that would be found in the accounts module of a multipurpose ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) System. Dream provides flexible and scaleable user-defined accounting that can suit all requirements and can also react rapidly to match and keep pace with a business as it develops.