Case Study

Company Snapshot

Number of iplicit users
15

Previous System
Exchequer

Go Live
November 2019

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du Boulay CONTRACTS

du Boulay discusses the need for a new cloud-based system

David Budd, Financial Director and Kate Bialek, Financial Controller at du Boulay discuss why it's now imperative to be in the cloud.

Tell me about du Boulay?

David: du Boulay Contracts is a main contractor in the commercial fit-out and refurbishment sector of the construction industry. Based in London, we have been operating for almost 40 years in the field of fitting out high-end hospitality premises. We specialise in restaurants, bars, pubs and nightclubs though we have also fitted out many offices, casinos, hotels, airport lounges, and high street multiple units nationwide & in Europe.

What are the day-to-day demands that are typically placed upon your finance system?

Kate: Cash flow management is an essential element to a business like ours; in order for every project to run smoothly, we have to ensure that we are working within the expectations of the client while also ensuring that procurement is delivering in accordance to the needs of the contractors and sub-contractors working on site.

We need a system to keep a close eye on invoice authorisations while providing up-to-the minute reporting on our cash positions and be able predict accurate forecasts, regarding future cash requirements per project, to ensure nothing is delayed unnecessarily.

What led to your decision to change systems?

Kate: We felt that our previous system wasn't sufficiently flexible for our needs. In particular, it was only ever used by our finance staff as it felt too cumbersome to be used by the project teams. In addition, our old system was on-premise which meant that there was no access to any information regarding invoicing or expense management and the like, which was very limiting for the majority of our staff. My personal opinion is that our old system felt like it was designed only for accountants, whereas the new one is certainly much more than this.

David: The need to be in the Cloud is now as imperative as a fax machine was in the 1990s, especially in this locked-down year.

iplicit

What was your key criteria for a new system and why did you choose iplicit over the other systems being considered?

Kate: I first heard about **iplicit** when coming across their free MTD gateway that was being offered to companies who were struggling to find a solution. We knew we had a possible solution with our old system, but it was just very expensive! Obviously, as an accountant, you always have to make sure that you look after the money but it wasn't just that; we wanted to deal with a provider that was proactive in finding solutions to problems, ideally before they even impact us so we as a company don't have to spend time worrying about issues caused by HMRC or changes in legislation.

Additionally, it was important to us that the new finance system was based on Microsoft's Azure platform. We have many Microsoft products within our business and it is good to know that our finance system is easily integrated with our current ways of working. Most of all though, the fact that **iplicit** could be configured to accommodate exactly what we want from a system, which is the ability to include our project team in being able to use it. This means that we will have one system, with one dashboard that provides all of the information that is required, for all staff within our business - this was the major decision point for us.

We looked at several other systems, once we'd made the decision to upgrade. It seemed as though there were several very expensive offerings that could do what we needed but had no way of being justified in terms of cost. We also considered a few lower cost options but they just didn't have the flexibility we required.

Since going live with the system, how has your general experience been with both the software and iplicit staff?

Kate: There was a learning curve for me at the beginning, but this was mostly due to the fact that I was heavily involved in the implementation process. This meant that I became familiar with all the systems within our company, in order to identify how best to configure with **iplicit**. However, most of my team would say that the system is very user friendly and intuitive. So, even staff who aren't confident with computer systems in general are very comfortable using the **iplicit** system, without worrying that they could break something!

David: **iplicit** has such a range of user-defined buttons and knobs which allows for a completely bespoke solution to our needs. We continue to develop the functionality for the non-accounts staff, though not as quickly as we'd planned, as a result of delays incurred due to the pandemic. However, I can think of no reporting requirements for du Boulay that **iplicit** cannot provide.

From a functionality perspective, what are the major differences with your new system compared to the old one?

Kate: First of all, the ability to work remotely has been an enormous difference. In fact, with our old system it just wouldn't have been possible work the way we've had to for the past few months. Also, the flexibility of the system and the quickness of the updates is excellent. Whenever I have a design requirement, the iplicit team is very quick to respond. Interestingly, I have quite a lot of contact with the iplicit support team, but not because the system isn't working correctly; my conversations are regarding a variety of tweaks here and there as we change our procedures and workflow - and this is something that really stands out with the new system; it's the ability to tailor it to exactly how we need it to work.
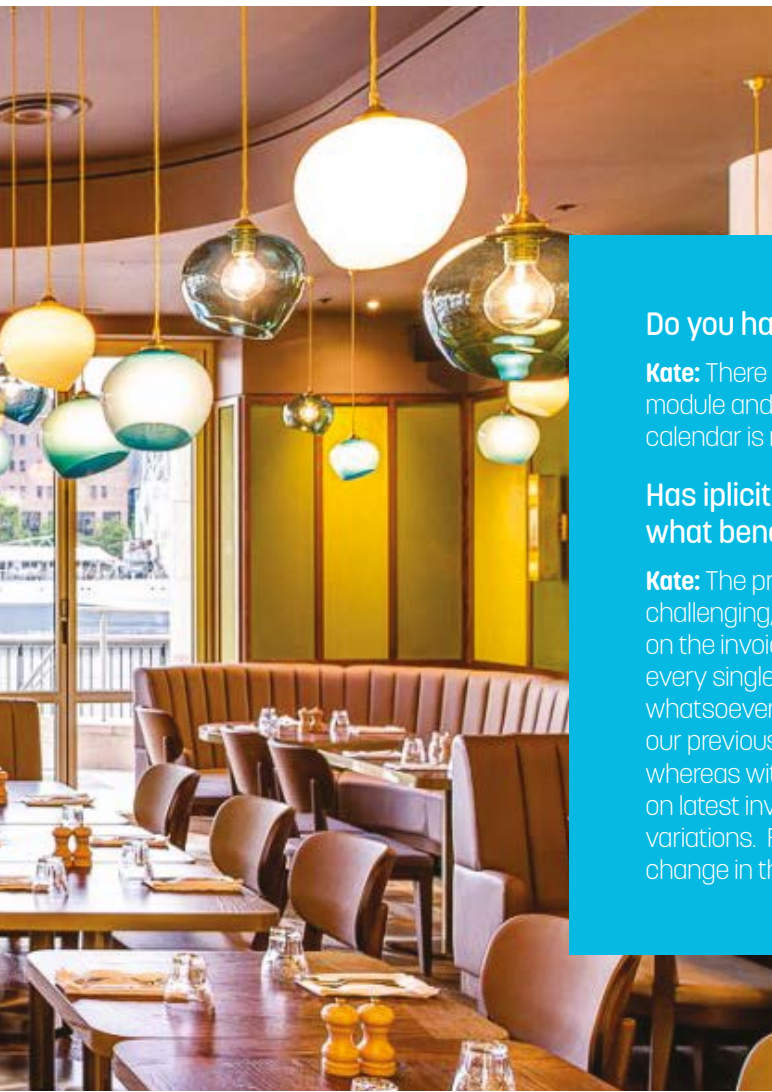
Do you have a favourite feature within iplicit?

Kate: There are so many! Actually, one of my favourites is the HR module and the ability to very quickly track absences on the calendar is really helpful when managing the team.

Has iplicit changed the way you work and if so, what benefits have you seen?

Kate: The procedure for processing our paperwork has always been challenging; often with a constant backlog of outstanding authorisations on the invoices. Our costing system is such that we have to make sure every single invoice is justified as a cost and if there is any variation whatsoever, it has to be immediately communicated to our client. With our previous system, it was impossible to keep any control over this area whereas with **iplicit**, it's very simple to run an up-to-the-minute report on latest invoices or single supplier invoices and instantly identify any variations. From a cash flow perspective, it's creating a lot of positive change in the routines as to how we used to do things.

Changing Finance systems can be quite a daunting prospect; having been through the process, what advice would you give other Heads of Finance who are contemplating upgrading their system?

Kate: Yes, make sure you clean up all of your Ledger accounts. It's always easier to make a change once all the outstanding issues are well documented. One thing we found extremely easy to do was the retrieval of documents on the system - seeing the PDFs and other kinds of attachments, email, Excel spreadsheets and pretty much anything you can think of. These documents build up over time and transform how we can access information quickly, and remotely, but it's good to start with a clean slate when implementing a new system.

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Anything else you'd like to say?

Kate: Yes, we are extremely pleased with having made the change to **iplicit**. I forgot to mention, we had to change our routines since upgrading the finance system; we are now part of a PLC and have to report monthly as opposed to quarterly. Preparing balance sheet and P&L accounts would never have been possible, on a monthly basis, with the old system. The speed of preparation of reports and reconciliation of accounts never ceases to amaze me. With our old system, we would have to allow three weeks for report preparation whereas with iplicit, we can now do everything inside a week!

David: I would like to mention Brian Weaving in the most favourable terms as he has held our hands throughout the development process and has been such a credit to your company. I am only sorry that his beloved Norwich City FC didn't make the cut last season!

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For further information contact
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