

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships

KTP BENEFITS

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships are designed to benefit everyone involved

- 🔄 Businesses will acquire new knowledge and expertise
- 🔄 KTP Associates will gain business-based experience and personal development opportunities
- 🔄 University, college or research organisation will bring their experience to enhance the business relevance of their research and teaching

A DTI Business Support Solution

SALT UNION LIMITED SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT KEEPS BUSINESS ON THE RIGHT ROAD

ABOUT THIS CASE STUDY

SALT UNION'S DE-ICING BUSINESS IS THE MAJOR UK SUPPLIER OF ROCK SALT FOR ROAD SALTING. THIS KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PARTNERSHIP (KTP) WITH LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY WAS INITIATED TO ENSURE THE ROBUSTNESS OF THE COMPANY'S 'EXACTRAK' PRODUCT AND TO DEVELOP THE FUNCTIONAL SPECIFICATION FOR A COMMERCIALY-SUSTAINABLE, GENERIC VERSION SUITABLE FOR A GLOBAL MARKET.

ABOUT THE SPONSORS

THE DEPARTMENT FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY (DTI) DRIVES THE AMBITION OF 'PROSPERITY FOR ALL' BY WORKING TO CREATE THE BEST ENVIRONMENT FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS IN THE UK. THE DTI HELPS PEOPLE AND COMPANIES BECOME MORE PRODUCTIVE BY PROMOTING ENTERPRISE, INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY.

FAST FACTS

- 🔄 Improved robustness of original 'Exactrak' software product, delivering successful winter 2003/4 campaign
- 🔄 Developed enhanced replacement product, without need for specialist Information Technology partner, saving £15,000 annual licence fee
- 🔄 Increased profits by 40% by owning intellectual property (IP) rights on new product and managing development work in-house
- 🔄 Acquired skills and knowledge to manage complex information systems and enhance market position by diversifying into service markets
- 🔄 New areas of research and increased knowledge of IP law for Academic Partners
- 🔄 'Business Leader of Tomorrow' award 2004 for Associate and job with company

The Company

"The KTP project brought robustness, flexibility, cost savings and scalability to our Exactrak product. We could not have achieved any of this without the expertise and framework of the KTP."

Alan Sheen, Commercial Manager



The KTP team: (clockwise from left) **Alistair Beere**, Academic Supervisor LJMU; **Alan Sheen**, Industrial Supervisor Salt Union Ltd; **Sandra Middleton**, Academic Supervisor LJMU; **Ben Chadwick**, KTP Associate.

The De-Icing Business is part of Salt Union, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Compass Minerals. Operating from the Winsford Rock Salt Mine, Cheshire, the Company works with local authorities across Britain to find practical solutions for the local supply, safe storage and spreading of rock salt.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Sales for the De-icing Business were predominantly seasonal and a successful winter campaign was imperative. With many customers reliant on the Company's online tracking and reporting system for their winter road maintenance programmes, this KTP project was initiated to review the system and ensure its robustness for the coming winter. The project

was also intended to extend the system's applications to generate year-round income. However, during the review phase it became apparent that the system was at the limit of its development capability and the project aims were therefore revised to include the design of an enhanced replacement product.

BENEFITS

This successful collaboration achieved all its aims and more. The initial 'Exactrak' system review and subsequent work with the external software contractor resulted in an improved product, meeting the needs of both customers and the De-icing Business during winter 2003/4.

A new, generic tracking and reporting system was developed, designed to interface with a vehicle's control box and be easily adapted to new markets. Using external software contractors, initial work involved developing a replacement winter road maintenance product, which provided real-time data on gritter location and salt spreading. The product has subsequently been configured for new applications, such as gully cleansing and refuse collection.

The De-icing Business now has the knowledge required to manage a complex information system with several external suppliers, without the need for a specialist Information Technology (IT) partner. The Company has acquired the IP rights of its

new system and has the expertise to manage and protect its commercial interests, as well as to ensure compliance with international corporate law.

RESULTS

- Improved competitive position and new market openings
- Increased customer confidence in service levels
- Higher profits and reduced costs through removal of specialist IT partner and associated product licence fee
- Turnover doubled through increased number and variety of vehicles using new tracking system, generating year-round income
- Potential for expansion into export markets

The Associate

"The KTP programme has been a fantastic opportunity for me. I could not have imagined being central to such a large and challenging project so soon after graduating."

Ben Chadwick, 'Exactrak' Project Manager

Ben Chadwick was recruited as the KTP Associate, with his interpersonal and leadership skills playing a key role in its success.

BENEFITS

Throughout this project, Ben demonstrated good time management skills, meeting tight deadlines for both the initial product review and subsequent development of a replacement product. His knowledge and understanding of Information Systems has been enhanced through careful questioning and problem solving, enabling him to discuss requirements with the design and development teams with confidence. Project work has also enabled Ben to build on his management skills, and he has demonstrated considerable ability to motivate others to deliver their targets for the good of the overall project and team, leading by example.

RESULTS

- Enhanced management and leadership skills, recognised by a 'Business leader of tomorrow' award from the DTI in 2004
- Completing an NVQ level four in Management
- Offered and accepted a job with Salt Union as 'Exactrak' Project Manager

The Academic Partner

"The team had an excellent opportunity to put into practice, in a commercial environment, the theoretical concepts and principles that they deliver at the University and to develop new expertise, leading to enhanced international recognition."

Sandra Middleton, Lead Academic



Sandra Middleton led a team of academics from the School of Business Information and the School of Management at Liverpool John Moores University to deliver this KTP.

BENEFITS

The project's well-publicised success has helped to enhance the University's reputation both locally and nationally. Working on the development of a major new commercial system to a very tight deadline has enabled academics to acquire expertise in international corporate and computer-related law. The experience has led to major revisions to the Information Systems Management module of an MBA course, to incorporate increased legal knowledge. New areas of research have opened up, both for the School as a whole and for individual post graduate students.

Case studies based on project work have been built into various undergraduate modules, adding real business relevance to the courses.

RESULTS

- Recognised expertise in international corporate and computer-related law
- Enhanced business relevance of teaching and research
- Positive publicity resulting from project awards
- New areas of research identified