

Helping United Utilities to deliver World Class Asset Management

Customer Profile

United Utilities is the UK's largest listed water company. United Utilities own, operate and maintain utility assets, including water, wastewater, electricity and gas. UU are a FTSE 100 company with a turnover of £2 billion and are the UK's market leader in utility outsourcing.

Not only do UU provide water to seven million people across the North West of England, they also share our knowledge and expertise, helping other organisations to develop practical and sustainable solutions which make their operations more efficient. UU clients include Northern Gas Networks, Southern Water, Welsh Water, Scottish Water and Electricity North West - and that's just in the UK.

The Challenge

The 'World Class Asset Management' project has the vision of speedily delivering the world class tools United Utilities most urgently need to manage their assets. The project team have been tasked with delivering this for United Utilities for two reasons. Firstly, a world class company delivers 'World Class' performance for customers, 'World Class' returns for shareholders and 'World Class' careers for United Utilities staff. Secondly, United Utilities capability will be tested at the next Price Review and if they can't clearly show they have used 'World Class' data, systems, tools and thinking to prepare their proposals, they face the immediate prospect of not receiving the funding they believe they require.

In simple terms, this means United Utilities need to know the cost of everything they buy, the quantified risk (things will go wrong) and the cost of operating and maintaining their plant. They then have to get the best value from everything they do with regard to the level of service customers need and are prepared to buy.

The Project

The WCAM project has several customers all requiring different levels of data to allow the PR09 and future submissions to be calculated and submitted to the regulator. In order for this to be a controlled, repeatable procedure the need for a data warehouse was identified with all relevant procedures and processes defined, both to feed the required data into the warehouse and then to deliver the required data to each customer. At all stages these processes must be auditable and repeatable.

To enable the WCAM project to succeed the first requirement was for a Data Warehouse Architecture to be agreed. This consisted of 3 main deliverables:

1. Define Best Practice Data Warehouse Architecture
2. Develop Reference Architecture on a Microsoft Platform
3. Ensure that all Policies and Standards are defined for the Data Warehouse

Once the Data Warehouse Architecture was completed the Data Warehouse build could start to be defined, the first steps of which are to complete a full set of documentation for both the overview of the data warehouse and the data warehouse requirements, listing each customer's needs and expectations. Crimson are currently supporting United Utilities in this process which is in the early stages of definition.

As a pre-cursor to the data warehouse being delivered, all WCAM data was required for the completion of the Price Review for 2009, as this was required ahead of the delivery of the data warehouse. The WCAM data needed to be supplied to two main customers during this phase – Tynemarch who have a system called Pioneer which allows the maintenance costs to be calculated for all United Utilities assets and the United Utilities valuation team which will then value all United Utilities assets. The asset data is currently held in many disparate sources, each being at different levels of completeness and in some cases conflicting with the same data held in another source.

Why Crimson?

The task to deliver this data was seen to be a key requirement to the successful completion of the PR09 submission. To aid in this Crimson were asked to supply a project manager and 4 extra staff to help form a team which could supply this data as required. The team is known as the Data Release team and is responsible for ensuring that asset data is loaded from all sources, collated, sorted, Asset attribution is inferred where appropriate and finally delivered in the format and groupings required to each customer. This has led to the Data Release team having strong business awareness and a thorough understanding of the asset / asset attribution information.

This process is extremely time consuming and very labour intensive. Two sets of asset data have already been delivered to the customers to enable the draft PR09 submission to be produced and a final pass is now being completed to allow the final PR09 submission to be produced. During the last months the team have worked a large amount of extra hours including many weekends and have clearly shown their commitment ensuring that all deadlines have been met.

Key Client Benefits

The processes and procedures the Data Release Team have produced are repeatable and auditable and can be presented to the regulator. All asset data is now stored in one data base which will be the forerunner to the data warehouse. What is at present a largely labour intensive process although it has been automated in part will be further automated when migrated to a data warehouse.

For more details contact the Crimson team on [01675 466 477](tel:01675466477) or sales@crimson.co.uk