The English Institute of Sport (EIS) supports British athletes through innovation and research. Now, with PS+ and Project Online, they can make that support even better.

The English Institute of Sport (EIS) has been the UK's Sports science, medicine, technology and engineering arm since 2002 providing sport science and medical services that improve the health, fitness, training and preparation of the UK's most elite athletes. Its practitioners known as the 'team behind the team', work with Coaches and Performance Directors to optimise training programmes and maximise performance with tangible results, working with medal winning athletes such as Jessica Ennis-Hill, Mo Farah, Sir Bradley Wiggins, Victoria Pendleton and Sir Chris Hoy.

The EIS's Research and Innovation team aims to maximise British athletes' performance through innovation in equipment and accessories, training science, medical management and coaching techniques. Its team of Project Managers work with a wider network of experts, focusing on success in both summer and winter global competitions.

We run a significant portfolio of projects in partnership with the sports we work with. All our projects are designed to have a performance impact and help us win more medals in Rio or PyeongChang.
~ Naomi Stenhouse, Head of Project and Performance Engineering

The Issue

In 2014 the Research and Innovation Team found itself juggling an expansive portfolio of projects, but without any dedicated tools. Word documents and Excel tables were used to manage projects, but this proved challenging when it came to taking an overview, identifying issues and ensuring that projects were delivered to time and budget. The team also needed a more effective way of coordinating activities with a wider network of expert consultants and advisers, many of whom have little specialist project management knowledge or experience.

The Research and Innovation Team needed a project management solution that was easy to work with, adaptable to existing working practices and that would save its experts and Project Managers time. They also wanted a system that could help Project Managers take an overview and prioritise. In a field with hard deadlines and athletes with packed schedules, timing is critical. As Stenhouse puts it:

"[Top level competitions] will happen in 2016 whether we're ready or not. If you're not ready then you have to wait another four years, and some of our athletes won't have another opportunity."

The Solution

Having evaluated a range of solutions and providers, the Research and Innovation team chose PS+, the award-winning pre-configured best practice solution for Microsoft Project Online, as designed and implemented by CPS. As a Microsoft Project and Portfolio Management Gold Partner, CPS' presence on the government preferred supplier list made the tendering process easier. What's more, the physical proximity of CPS's Marlow office to an EIS site at Bisham Abbey, Buckinghamshire, made for an even stronger partnership between the two organisations.

CPS recognised immediately that PS+ was a natural fit for the team's requirements. Not only is it designed for rapid implementation, with the ability to be up-and-running in under two weeks, but its simplified user interface is perfect for users without previous experience in Project Online.

PS+ also makes it easy to roll-out a solution with core functionality enabled, so that experts and Project Managers can begin utilising it straight away. Preconfigured views, reports, access controls and templates make implementation even easier, with a subscription that includes all support, apps and updates, so that improvements can be rapidly employed. Most of all, PS+ gives the team a single repository for project data, tuned for prioritisation and maximum visibility across the entire portfolio.

Having worked with the Research and Innovation team to define the shape of the PS+ solution and any customisation required, CPS then provided the consultancy to implement and configure it. The final phase was then to design and deliver end-user training, to maximise the tool's usage and to assist with any adoption difficulties

PS+ has now replaced the old Word documents and Excel tables, giving EIS's Project Managers and experts a single place to enter project information, manage resources and update stakeholders. Additionally, a custom workflow and custom built governance report has made tracking projects a lot easier whilst improving transparency, so that both Project Managers and senior management can both watch progress and follow company guidelines. Meanwhile, analysis and reporting tools have enabled the team to look in-depth at any one project, a group, or even the entire portfolio.

The Benefits

The initial phase is now live, and the benefits are already becoming clear to EIS.

It's making the job of our Project Managers easier, with less duplication of data entry into multiple systems. The other benefit we are seeing is that we have all the data from different projects in one place. Previously, it was quite difficult for us to see all the projects that we are doing with sailing, for example, whereas now the information is all stored centrally, and we can just filter the information we need. That's really great. It gives us a much better picture of our work as a whole, and allows us to be more strategic. We can identify whether we're over-committed or over-stretched, and see where any bottlenecks are going to be.

Throughout the process, Stenhouse has been impressed with CPS's commitment and support:

It's been great. We've had lots of engagement from the team there. When we have been using a consultant and, for whatever reason, they have been unable to answer a question, there has always been a network of support behind them.

Next Steps

With phase one of the solution rolled out, the Research and Innovation team are now planning future phases. Says Sternhouse:

"We're really excited about PS+ and what it's going to bring to our work, and how it's going to make it even better. In elite sport – however you're involved in it – you're always striving to improve and do things better. That's the philosophy we apply to everything we do, and it's no different when it comes to how we make our work and project management more efficient."

About PS+

PS+ is the leading preconfigured best practice solution for Project Server and Project Online. PS+ takes the unknowns away from implementation enabling organisations to be up and running in less than fifteen days using a tried and tested solution utilised by thousands of users across the globe. PS+ adds significant value by providing pre-configured views, reports, access control and templates such as Prince2 and Agile, as well as award winning Apps from the authors.

About CPS

Corporate Project Solutions (CPS) specialise in the design and implementation of real solutions built on Microsoft® technology that transform businesses and deliver recognisable benefits. The organisation combines unparalleled technical expertise and deep understanding in solving business challenges. CPS is the UK's leading provider of Project Server and Project Online implementations and is an accredited management consultancy, Microsoft gold competency and cloud accelerate partner.

PS+ delivers tangible business results FAST.
Get in touch with us today, and make your projects easier tomorrow.

📞 01628 895600   ✉ demo@projectserverplus.com   🌐 www.projectserverplus.com