

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 optimize training programs and maximize 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 maximize 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 prioritize. 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.

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 utilizing 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 prioritization and maximum visibility across the entire portfolio.

After defining the shape of the PS+ solution and any customization required, the solution was implemented and configured. The final phase was then to design and deliver end-user training, to maximize 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."

Next Steps

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

“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.”