

Wickes

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*right people,
right place,
right time*



WorkPlace Systems helps Wickes deploy a Workforce Management Solution to improve customer service and remove waste.

Summary

Wickes wanted to further increase their customer service proposition to help drive additional revenue growth. To do this they realised they would need to invest in a new Workforce Management system that would produce more accurate staff schedules for each store as well as helping them with attendance management and to assist with the labour budgeting process.

During the selection process, Wickes acknowledged that their method for producing an accurate forecast of Workload Demand in each store was inadequate and that to get the best out of their intended investment in Workforce Management, they would need to address and improve this aspect as well.

After an extensive selection process Wickes selected WorkPlace Systems to provide the Workforce Management system and the Consulting Services to review all store processes to produce a representative set of labour standards and to develop an accurate operating model. This would enable the Workforce Management system to generate an accurate forecast of Workload Demand.

Like the majority of today's sophisticated Workforce Management systems, Workload Demand generation is an integral component and the generation of an accurate, credible Workload Demand is pivotal to the success of both labour budgeting and in-store scheduling. The development of a corporate model of operation is the best method of ensuring equitable forecasting of demand across a large estate.

The Company

Wickes, part of the Travis Perkins Group, is one of the UK's leading home improvement Retailers. Wickes now has a portfolio of 195 stores across the country.

Wickes stores are designed to appeal to serious DIY customers, who carry out more complex projects, and tradesmen, who undertake general repairs, maintenance and improvement projects for households. These customers are more demanding in terms of service, quality and price.

The Group's key objectives for its Wickes business are to achieve broader coverage in its target market and for Wickes to be established as the destination store for home improvement.

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The Problem

Wickes recognised that they could further improve customer satisfaction and increase revenues by delivering better customer service.

“We knew that if we could get a better match between our staff and our customer requirements this would make a significant contribution to our performance,” stated Craig Pickett, Stores Productivity Manager. To do this effectively Wickes knew they had to refine their current scheduling process and so decided to implement an automated scheduling system.

The basic premise of all scheduling systems is to improve service levels and reduce ineffectiveness by more closely aligning employees with Workload Demand throughout a trading period. The production of effective employee schedules is dependent on the generation of an accurate Workload Demand for each store, each with its varying characteristics in terms of trading profile and physical layout.

Although Wickes had a legacy system that produced the number of labour hours by store, it was deemed to be out of date and not driven by store activity or a customer service proposition. The system also produced forecasts that were not granular enough to provide a sound basis on which to produce daily employee schedules.

“We selected WorkPlace, because of their software, process review and standards development methodologies and track record in Retail, in particular the DIY sector,” commented Craig.

The Solution

Wickes has successfully implemented an estate wide Labour Budgeting, Forecasting, Scheduling and Time & Attendance software solution. The solution allows Wickes to accurately budget labour hours across the estate on an annual basis, provide short term forecasts according to local conditions, and to schedule its staff to this forecast according to contracts. The resulting actual hours are then captured within the Time & Attendance module which provides an output to the payroll system.

WorkPlace also reviewed, streamlined and documented all store processes, including customer service and management activities and subsequently produced standard timings for all activities. Working in co-operation with Wickes’ operations experts and using 5S and 6σ based improvement frameworks, WorkPlace defined and documented leanest in-store processes. Time standards were then developed for each of the documented processes. For this, WorkPlace utilised RetailEASE™, a predetermined time system developed specifically for the Retail industry.

“WorkPlace’s strong Retail expertise and understanding of the DIY business became apparent early on, particularly when reviewing existing processes and the development of labour standards was much quicker and more effective than expected,” said Craig.

The Results

The system is generating accurate schedules for Wickes staff to work to and capturing the exact hours staff are working against these schedules. The system is allowing increased flexibility to both Wickes and its staff in its recruitment process. Administration time has been reduced and accuracy of pay increased.

The generated labour standards have been easily integrated with the WorkPlace Budgeting and Forecasting modules to generate annual labour budgets and daily demand forecasts to enable the Scheduling module to produce accurate schedules.

WorkPlace worked to ensure the level of detail and structure of the operating model was appropriate for Wickes based on the nature of their business, the supporting data available and the complexity of ongoing maintenance.

“WorkPlace gave us an integrated approach to standards development and demand generation. The accuracy of the standards ensured a quick validation and sign-off from the Retail management team”, explained Craig Pickett. “The results so far have been outstanding with all stores that have completed the scheduling element of the rollout reaping the benefits of a more flexible and productive workforce and the amount of time and detail spent during the labour standards phase of the project have ensured good buy in at all levels of the business, from store colleagues to senior management.”

What of the Future?

With the competitive nature of Retailing, Wickes are continually looking for additional ways to refine and improve their operations. The investment made in Workforce Management and a flexible labour standards solution provides Wickes with the flexibility to quickly implement changes in their processes and to understand how these changes need to be staffed to maintain their high levels of customer service.

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