

Hitachi Solutions helps AQA get the best results



AQA is a trusted and comprehensive provider of qualifications, support and development for hundreds of thousands of teachers and students throughout the UK. Clear and timely communication with customers is essential to AQA's business and this has recently been significantly improved thanks to the implementation of Microsoft Dynamics Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

“Not only has the new Microsoft Dynamics system from Hitachi Solutions helped to reduce our costs, we have also been able to streamline our processes and become a more efficient and effective organisation. The consultants from Hitachi Solutions have an excellent understanding of CRM and how it can work most effectively to meet the specific requirements of our business.”

Alison Foulkes, Project Manager, AQA

Valued by Students and Teachers

AQA's aim is to bring out the best in students and teachers by providing services that lead to inspiring lessons and great learning. AQA is a leading provider of qualifications and support for teachers and students. The company offers a broad range of academic qualifications for 14-19 year olds, helping every student and teacher to realise their potential. AQA's qualifications equip students to succeed in the next stage of their lives and are highly valued by employers and universities. AQA also works collaboratively with teachers to create resources that are designed around their day-to-day needs.

CRM is a Key Tool for AQA

AQA employs over 1,000 staff and they all need to access customer relationship software to organise and manage interactions with customers to help provide a better, more informed and more responsive customer service.

AQA's staff and management need to manage more than 445,000 customer records. These customers have so far generated over a million queries, which means that CRM software is a very important tool for the company. AQA's incumbent system no longer met its requirements. As the old system was coming up for renewal, AQA decided to take the opportunity to search the market to see if there might be a better solution available that would not only save costs, but also help to re-look at its business processes to ensure the operation runs at optimal accuracy and speed.

A Comprehensive Selection Process

Alison Foulkes, Project Manager, comments, "Hitachi Solutions gave us a solid, no-nonsense proposal for Microsoft Dynamics CRM which would provide AQA with top-rated functionality, high user adoption rates and a product that would adapt to its business needs - all at an affordable price". Alison Foulkes continues, "Hitachi Solutions' proposed CRM solution was developed by Microsoft which gave us a high level of comfort and familiarity because of other Microsoft products that are widely used at AQA."

AQA launched a detailed consultation, including drop-in sessions for staff. This was a major exercise involving over 100 people over a two day period. Feedback showed that 83% of those who attended believed that Microsoft Dynamics would provide all or most of the functionality they required. Alison Foulkes says, "From a feature/function point of view, Dynamics CRM was the preferred choice of our users." Following a suitable response about some technical questions as well as a suggested way forward that tackled AQA's tight timescales, Hitachi Solutions was awarded the contract.

Rapid and Successful Implementation

AQA decided to take a rapid approach to the implementation of Microsoft Dynamics CRM. This meant that six months after the contract was signed 500 of AQA's 1000 staff successfully went live. Alison Foulkes explains "The implementation involved a number of challenges including migration of important data from the old system as well as integration with the exam entries system." Alison Foulkes continues, "The new Microsoft Dynamics system was built to our specification and we ensured user input and buy-in by running 14 design workshops with users from across the company to make sure we got it right. During this process, Hitachi Solutions suggested way of working made us realise that they had also understood our specification very well."

Once the Dynamics CRM solution had been built and tested, users were prepared for the implementation using the 'train the trainer' approach where a selected group of key users were trained, ensuring that knowledge was quickly and effectively transferred. In addition, AQA set up a group of super-users who are on hand to provide support, so no-one has to struggle on their own.

Neil Du Cros, Head of IT Services and CRM Project Executive, says, "This is a significant project that will make a big difference to the way we do business. Microsoft Dynamics will eventually become ubiquitous and people across AQA who aren't using it now will be using it in the future."

Close Relationship

AQA and Hitachi Solutions have worked very closely with AQA's current users to ensure that all their requirements have been captured and that the implementation went according to plan. Microsoft Dynamics can be accessed using different methods, providing a broader user adoption and less application switching. Alison Foulkes comments, "We have had some excellent responses from our users on how much they prefer the new solution and as a Microsoft product, users also like the fact that Dynamics CRM is a lot more familiar to them, making it easy to use."

All CRM users at AQA can take advantage of seeing the same picture of customers' details with a full 360 degree view, at the click of a button. This means staff can resolve issues quickly and reduce handling times; helping to ensure a reliable and coherent customer service is delivered across the company.

Alison Foulkes concludes, "Not only has the new Microsoft Dynamics system from Hitachi Solutions helped to reduce our costs, we have also been able to streamline our processes and become a more efficient and effective organisation. The consultants from Hitachi Solutions have an excellent understanding of CRM and how it can work most effectively to meet the specific requirements of our business. The transition to the new system has been remarkably smooth and with another 500 users going live in the coming months, we will continue to make the service we provide to our customers more efficient and effective, improve operations and reduce our costs even further as we continue to drive the business forward."

Contact details

Hitachi Solutions Europe, Ltd.
11th Floor, Tower 42
25 Old Broad Street
London EC2N 1HQ
UK

+44 (0) 844 693 1538

Why Hitachi Solutions

Hitachi Solutions is one of the largest, most qualified and highly experienced Microsoft Dynamics consulting firms across the globe, capable of handling complex tier-one displacement projects. Our company's calibre of expertise and commitment to customers is evidenced through our consistent recognition from both Microsoft and industry analysts.

Contact a Hitachi Solutions expert to discuss how our Microsoft Dynamics Solutions can help improve your productivity.