

# ICON takes clinical approach to project management with Primavera

## Project Management Highlights:

- Primavera solution supports 2,000 employees at 39 locations throughout Asia, Europe, UK and US
- Single, global view of staff activities, workloads and utilisation
- Staff workloads and utilisation optimized to keep clinical trials on time and budget while maximizing client services



There are few sectors that require as much endurance as the pharmaceuticals industry. For while there is a constant race to be first to market with new products, this race can often take many years, during which time strict rules must be continually observed. When trialling new products, there can be no short cuts, and at no stage must quality control be sacrificed for speed – pharmaceuticals companies increasingly rely on the efficiency of their outsourced development partners to undertake these critical trials.

One such organisation is ICON Clinical Research, a division of ICON. ICON's range of services includes clinical trial management, biometrics, interactive technologies, central laboratory and imaging, clinical pharmacology and consulting services, all designed to help its clients implement clinical trials as quickly as possible, and complete them to the highest possible standard. ICON has 41 offices in 24 countries

worldwide, and prides itself both on its ability to take on long-term complex global trials, and also on the personalised and tailored services it can provide for locally managed projects.

In this highly competitive industry, completing work on schedule and on budget is critical, however, it is equally important for ICON Clinical Research to keep records of all employee activity. The organisation assigns a team of staff to every trial undertaken, which will remain in place for its duration. Billing can present a considerable challenge, especially on large-scale projects, as the organisation has an obligation to keep its clients informed about the status of the trials and the work completed. In the past, ICON Clinical Research had difficulty in keeping track of this information, as there was no formal system for recording data, while obtaining the relevant details proved to be a drain on resources.

In addition to this, the organisation also found it difficult to manage the workforce itself. At any one time, there are several hundred projects in operation, while on many trials, dedicated project teams are spread across several offices. Previously, managers were unable to gain a single global view of staff activities and workloads which could have an impact on staff utilisation. This is particularly important given that the majority of employees are high-value professionals, and even a small increase in utilisation can have significant financial benefits.

To combat these problems, ICON Clinical Research realised that a more effective system for managing projects was required.

“Resource management is critical, and we realised that by deploying tools to optimise staff utilisation, we would also be able to provide data to permit analysis of project profitability,” said Andrew Thompson, IT programme manager, ICON Clinical Research. “It was therefore vital for us to deploy a system that could provide detailed information about staff workloads and time management.”

ICON Clinical Research evaluated project management software from several vendors including Primavera and Niku, eventually opting for Primavera based on the combination of its timesheet and management capabilities. The software was initially deployed four years ago in the Clinical Research division to record all billable activity, and currently supports 2,000 users spread across 39 locations, including sites in the UK, Europe, the United States and Asia.

Primavera provides ICON Clinical Research with a centralised system for managing resources, allowing managers at any site to gain real-time visibility into project activity and ascertain which staff are working on which trials. From here, resources can be appropriately assigned based on project requirements.

“Staff allocation has been greatly improved by the Primavera system, and we can now ensure that each member of each team gets given the correct workload,” continued Thompson. “Consequently, we’ve been able to enhance the quality of the service we provide to our clients, and this is one reason why we are consistently achieving high levels of a repeat business.”

As well as optimising workloads, ICON Clinical Research can now determine the amount of time each person spends on a project with greater accuracy. As Thompson explains, “the time sheet function in the Primavera software has been instrumental in helping us process information and ensure that clients are serviced correctly.”

On top of this, the organisation is now looking to extend use of the solution into additional ICON divisions, as well as extending its functionality at a strategic level. This will involve using Primavera’s software to judge whether or not each project is in line with ICON Clinical Research’s overall strategic objectives. ICON Clinical Research also intends to switch to a weekly billing approvals system in the near future, replacing the existing monthly cycle. By doing so it hopes to reduce the time taken for approvals by three days in each month, as well as improving the quality of the information.

Having realised the value of tactical management, ICON Clinical Research is now using Primavera as a strategic portfolio management solution to capitalise on these timesavings, by increasing the proportion of time spent working on strategic activities.

“Up until now, there have been challenges in gaining enterprise-wide visibility into projects, but extending the functionality of Primavera should address this issue,” said Thompson. “It will be a more rigorous approach to resource management and project management in general, and should enable us to further improve our level of service to the pharmaceuticals industry.”



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