

People and information management

[Business](#), [Management](#)



" Information systems are the means by which people and organisations, utilising technologies, gather, process, store, use and disseminate information. " (<http://www.ukais.org> - Definition of Information Systems)

The purpose of this brief is to evaluate the current information systems within Neville Construction Limited, identify the usage, facilities, limitations (for both management and employees), problems and inefficiencies. I will provide a summary to the Board of the evaluation results.

It will provide recommendations on improvements that can be made through additional or improved information systems in order to drive efficiencies throughout the business. The brief will work on the basis of recommendations for new information systems for Neville Construction Limited primarily but with a view to linking the systems to other areas of the business as a whole. I will not recommend a specific software or hardware requirement until the Board have agreed if new information systems are to be implemented. Current information systems

The current information systems within Neville Construction Limited were implemented in 1986 and consist of a basic suite of office administration packages such as word processing, invoicing and basic accounts. Of the administration packages being used, the Finance department is the biggest user with invoicing and basic accounts. The word processing package is used throughout the other departments. The word processing system is perfectly adequate for general day-to-day tasks such as letters, minutes, reports, and quoting.

In addition to the basic administration packages there are also a considerable number of printers throughout the building due to the absence of a network, along with faxes and photocopying machines. They are in poor condition and prone to failure, resulting in further delays and backlog of work. Maintenance of the equipment is minimal due to the fact that most items are now obsolete. An informal interview of all company staff was carried out prior to compiling this brief and the results showed that many staff would feel uncomfortable with the introduction of new systems.

Some staff have been employed for many years in the same departments and have become used to the traditional methods of working that are in operation. There will be some challenges adopting new processes with these staff and care must be taken to ensure they are fully bought in to the benefits any new system will bring.

3.00 System Limitations

The Finance department is able to work effectively using the systems available but the data input required is labour intensive and is prone to a high rate of human error.

The system is only able to produce invoices and reports based on what has been typed in by the user. This practice doesn't allow for matching invoices against payments received or allow the other functions to link estimates or tenders against final invoicing. This is carried out manually by printing and filing together. As previously mentioned, the word processing system is suited to minor office administration and various communications. However, this all needs to be printed out and posted, which invariably takes time to process and incurs high printing costs.

In addition to the limited use of the packages detailed above, only a small number of the 65 head office based staff are trained to operate the systems. The everyday use is by general administrative staff, with the more senior staff dealing with telephone enquiries, client meetings, and hand writing tasks such as estimates and quotations. The traditional working practices mean there is little or poor quality information available to management. This has resulted in limited acknowledgement or support by the senior management of the available Management Information Systems (MIS) used in the market place today.

The remaining 55 field based staff have no direct access to paper work or information unless it is sent out to them manually. This results in a huge amount of time spent sending orders, estimates and other paperwork directly to the staff on site - an unnecessary waste of time, resource and expenditure. This in turn could cause delays on site if orders or estimates are not received on time. Currently, a typical customer order would need to pass through five different departments within the business before completion.

This wastes time and money and can result in lost paperwork and errors during the lifecycle. As there is no clear method of communication or connection between the departments paperwork could sometimes sit on someone's desk for days if they are away from the office for any period of time. All internal communication is cascaded to the staff through use of notice boards, word of mouth or relying on managers to pass the information on effectively. External communication is via telephone, fax or face-to-face meetings.

The lack of a system to record data results in lapses in compulsory training and development, including refresher courses in basic legal requirements such as Health & Safety training, first aid courses and IOSH certification.

There is no advertising policy within the company, except a small advert in the local business directory. The business operates through word of mouth and contracts passed on from other companies within the Strathgammon Estate. The information systems in operation within Neville Construction Limited are outdated and inefficient, despite being adequately suited to some elements of the business.

Internal and external communication is limited in content and frequency, which results in inconsistent working practices, poor awareness amongst staff, and a poor understanding of the strategy and direction of the company. Effective internal communications would help improve the disconnect between intrinsically linked departments. Accurate, detailed and reliable information available throughout the various departments will benefit the business, as staff will have greater clarity on their responsibilities and accountabilities.

The management team have to rely on verbal updates and typed memorandum to gain a good understanding of the company performance. There is a lack of good quality, substantive information on which decision-making at an executive level can be based. In summary, the business needs to adopt a new MIS package in order to operate more effectively, efficiently and to provide the appropriate data that would benefit the future growth and

development anticipated by the Board, and also give a competitive advantage over other local businesses.