



Tony Morris, Supply Chain Director at Ring Lighting Ltd says: "We needed a solution that would give us quick and easy access to product information and enable us to speed up our product cycle through improved monitoring and management at every stage."

Finding the right fit

Having investigated the marketplace, Ring Lighting invited four companies to demonstrate what their solutions could offer. Frontline Consultancy, an IBM Premier Business Partner, demonstrated an IBM Express Advantage solution based on its own Kudos Content Management System software, IBM Lotus Domino Utility Server Express and IBM System x Express servers.

"The Frontline Kudos solution was a near perfect fit for all our current requirements, it offered us plenty of potential for further development in the future through features like its extranet capabilities and it was affordable." explains Morris. "The fact that Frontline is an IBM Premium Business Partner gave me added confidence that the solution would deliver – it provided valuable peace of mind to know that Frontline is backed by a well-respected organisation like IBM."

Bill Milligan, Managing Director at Frontline Consultancy and Business Services Ltd says: "The IBM Express Advantage programme is specially designed for mid-market companies and enabled us to offer Ring Lighting just the solution it needed

at a competitive price. There's no doubt that Frontline Consultancy's partnership with IBM helps bolster our appeal to potential clients. It's a partnership of which we're very proud."

Feature rich, yet easy to use

While enabling Ring Lighting to electronically store and maintain its product information, the new solution also provides powerful workflow capabilities that are easily configured to match requirements. Ring Lighting has transformed its paper-based information and spreadsheets into electronic forms delivered via a newly created intranet site. As new products are developed, their progress is tracked through each stage of the cycle.

Frontline Consultancy worked with Ring Lighting to understand its business processes before implementing and configuring the system to fit. Morris says: "Our new solution is very easy to use and configure. We had some initial training from Frontline and are now maintaining it ourselves, further tweaking it to our requirements as it settles in."

Step change in efficiency

It's still early days - Ring Lighting has only been using its new solution for a few months. However, the benefits are already becoming clear. The whole product introduction cycle is speeding up. People have access to reliable, up-to-date product information at the touch of a button and can always

see the exact status of a product's development. Morris says: "We used to waste time walking around our site asking people for documents or enquiring about product status. Thanks to our new IBM Express Advantage solution, productivity has greatly improved. We expect to see significant reductions in our time to market for new products."

Better visibility of a product's status enables the product introduction cycle to be managed far more efficiently and effectively. It's now clear where bottlenecks are occurring, for example. People are alerted to possible delays and can take appropriate action to prevent them becoming critical business problems.

The efficiency improvements will help Ring Lighting deal with even quite large temporary or permanent increases in demand for its products without supplementing its workforce. This is an important factor in remaining competitive in today's challenging global markets.

Ring Lighting is also impressed with the robust IBM infrastructure that its new solution runs on. "We've never used IBM servers before," says Morris. "They seem to be rock solid as far as reliability is concerned. We're pleased we chose an IBM Express Advantage solution."

Extending the benefits

Having experienced some of the efficiencies to be gained, Ring Lighting is already working with Frontline Consultancy to improve integration with its suppliers in China. At the moment information from China is provided on spreadsheets and a variety of forms. Data has to be re-keyed in the UK. The whole process is error-prone and time consuming.

Using the extranet features of the Kudos Content Management System will enable people in China to provide information directly into the UK system from their PCs using standard forms.

"Currently, we're only scratching the surface as far as the potential of our new solution is concerned. We could use its extranet capabilities to enable our customers to follow the progress of their orders, for example. And there's a wealth of possibilities in the HR area that our intranet could help with, such as holiday form processing and access to all our company policies. These are all options we'll be looking at more closely moving forward," concludes Morris.

For more information

Please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner. Visit us at: ibm.com/expressadvantage/uk

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– Bill Milligan, Managing Director at Frontline Consultancy and Business Services Ltd



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