

tesseract - client industry v.11

proven service solutions for  
'specialist wastewater engineering' companies

# Watling Hope - Innovators in service select Tesseract Service Centre - 'Saas' Option!

**watling hope****clients comment:**

"We've made the service department the business, moving it from an after-sales function to the front end of the customer relationship."

**Edward Palin** - MD Watling Hope

**tesseract comment:**

Whilst recognising that Watling Hope wanted the benefits straight away, tesseract support advised that the office staff need to understand the system first, you do not want 25 engineers phoning up and asking how it works, the office staff need to understand the system. With support from tesseract the phased implementation worked out seamlessly.

**Fierce Innovators in Service!**

How have flexibility and a 'customer first' attitude helped Watling Hope to become leaders in national specialist wastewater engineering services?

"We've made the service department the business, moving it from an after-sales function to the front end of the customer relationship," says Edward Palin, managing director of Watling Hope.

Watling Hope's development into service leaders in their field has not been a straight line, having grown into a service business out of a ground works business. An organisation which made its revenue from installing pumping stations and mechanical drainage devices realised the commercial sense in maintaining those devices, before taking the leap to maintaining devices that other people had installed as well.

Such a change in company emphasis has seen Watling Hope expand from 50 contracts 20 years ago to around 2,500 contracts today.

"We provided a unique professional approach in what wasn't a customer service orientated industry," says Palin. "Before us it was guys in overalls handing over dirty bits of paper." Watling Hope's unique attraction was a service company which put together usable reports and relationships which effectively looked after the customers' interests from a commercial perspective, as opposed to on a job by job basis.

**Continuing Innovation**

Like any good service business, Watling Hope are restless innovators, always looking to evolve better ways of delivering.

The latest stage of this evolution involved 18 months sizing up service solutions options, saying goodbye to the previous ERP platform in the process.

When the step was made they went with Tesseract Service Centre, and got their mobile engineering team online with Motorola's ES400 PDAs, although not simultaneously.

"I remember at the time saying to Tesseract that when we get the new system we want to recognise the benefits straight away," says Palin. "They wisely advised us we need our office to understand the system first, because you don't want 25 engineers phoning up and asking how it works when the people in the office don't understand it yet. That phased implementation has worked really well for us."

A phased approach was also applied to the eventual hardware rollout, with two engineers in the team given the ES400s to play with. This approach seems to have negated the expected resistance.

"The other engineers started saying 'when am I getting my PDA?'" says Palin.

Having an engineering team clamouring for new gear is not a common story; Watling Hope might be on to something with the drip feed of hardware solutions. It has revitalised the mobile team's approach to work; it represents a feeling of being invested in.

Regardless of industry, service organisations all have a similar set of needs. This played a large part in the process to ditch the ERP solution and side with Tesseract. "They had 20 years working in service, as opposed to an ERP solution which just adapted to fit service," says Palin. "We wanted a service solution for a service organisation."

*Continued overleaf:*

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# case study

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### watling hope

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#### Continued from overleaf:

"If a pumping station goes down it is business critical, people don't think about that. If you take a restaurant or a hotel, you can turn the water off and the customers would probably stay there. If they can't use the drainage, the toilets, you'd have to close the business. So being able to respond quickly and being able to keep the customer informed is a crucial feature of what we do."

#### Assessing the Service Process

Implementing a new system also gave Watling Hope the chance to reassess other areas of the way they worked.

The previous ERP system contained a legacy of site specific comments, meaning the information needed could only be found by trawling through pages of comments. Instead of dumping this data into the Service Centre, engineers were encouraged to re-inform head office of specific details, which would be entered in useful, context specific spaces.

The new system also encouraged a shift in the way regional teams are organised.

"We have quarterly meetings where we all get together," says Palin. "For a national business it's a huge environmental consideration for everyone to drive here. As we reorganised into areas with the roll out of the new system, we are now having area meetings; so management and operations will drive to meet the teams instead."

Communication has always been a key factor to the mobile engineering teams, with free calls between business mobiles encouraging knowledge sharing. In addition the area meetings impart company updates, but also might feature a supplier who will give a presentation on changes to a product. It also forms itself into something of a training road show, imparting customer service and technical training. Each session finishes on a forum to give engineers a voice, encouraging a friendly peer to peer atmosphere.

Watling Hope have fought hard to develop a professional service offering, and don't seem to have any plans to stop their progression.

#### What does the future hold?

"Continued growth and consolidation of customers," concludes Palin. "We're hoping to provide a more diverse range of services."

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