

About Us

At **change++** we help you achieve your business objectives by improving the way you manage information.

We work with you to develop systems that gather data more efficiently, report on it quickly, analyse it easily and present it clearly, giving your managers an immediate view of business performance.

Through listening to what you want to do and drawing on years of experience working with retail and leisure businesses, we can recommend and implement better information systems that will directly increase the value of your business.

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Budget approval database delivers a range of benefits for Whitbread teams

Background

The management of the budget approvals process in any large organisation, whether for capital or revenue spend, can be a challenge. Whether the project is a new property build or an information system, typically many parties and a large amount of documentation will be involved. Without rigorous information management, cost increases can be overlooked, changes unrecorded, relevant team members missed from email circulation lists; there are many potential pitfalls.

WHITBREAD

The Whitbread Approvals Database is designed to avoid the difficulties that can jeopardise complex projects. It evolved from a successful system **change++** had developed with Whitbread called the Property Pipeline database. This recorded all budget requests for new build and expansionary projects in the Whitbread property portfolio, from project inception through to completion. In the case of a hotel, the Property Pipeline database would capture the cost of every element of the build, all documentation and changes to the original specification, through to the point where the ribbon was cut on a brand new property.

The Finance team decided that a similar system that would allow users to create a project, and record everything against it, would ease the administration of the budget approval process and improve communication throughout a project's lifecycle. **change++** was briefed to build a database that could manage all Whitbread projects, capital and revenue, from pre-approval of budget through to the point where the project is 'approved'. It is called the Whitbread Approvals Database (WAD).

Solution



The Whitbread Approvals Database, or WAD, allows projects at pre-approval stage to be entered on the system, categorised, have documents uploaded, minutes loaded and tracked, and all associated stakeholders listed. Users can run parameterised standard reports, producing pre-formatted Excel output. It is a password-protected, secure system, ensuring changes can only be made by authorised parties.

When a project is approved, the system automatically sends out an approval notification form for the project manager to verify. Once approved, this will be uploaded into the Whitbread Oracle Fusion system. It is the integration with

this that makes WAD so effective. The Finance team have visibility on current and future project spend, an audit trail of actions recorded in the change log and all the documents related to the project; meeting notes can be completed using a template that then feeds into and updates the system.

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Benefits

According to Arfah Malik, Investment Process Lead in the Finance Transformation team at Whitbread, WAD has delivered multiple benefits to the business, “At any one time, the business may have over 400 projects with pre-approval status. To know that all these projects are recorded, have the appropriate documentation attached and can be viewed by all the parties working on them, is important for effective management of the budgeting process, and for robust governance and control.”

“Before WAD, the Investment Finance and Property teams used the Property Pipeline database to track approvals. Different spreadsheets were maintained by teams that were tracking other spend category approvals such as non-expansionary, information systems and overheads. The WAD database has enabled us to move these teams onto a joint process that works for all capital-related spend that requires Board approval.”

Benefits include;

- All documentation relating to a project can be uploaded, stored and easily accessed from a central repository database
- Every stakeholder has password-protected access to the project information relevant for their role
- Changes can be made, logged and communicated automatically by email to all parties
- An audit trail of actions is recorded in the change log
- Meeting notes can be completed using templates that are then sent as pdfs to relevant parties
- The database is automatically updated with the project and location numbers
- A robust database is accessible for audit and governance

In addition to these benefits, more than two days per month are saved on administration due to the automatic updating of project information and mailing of meeting minutes.

As Arfah Malik confirms, ‘Overall the project went really well, and we look forward to working with **change++** on a further database project for our major brand, Costa.’