

## Case Study

# Facilitating growth without increasing the cost base

**Client:** CB Richard Ellis

**Sector:** Property & Construction

**Project:** OpenAccounts

**Advanced Business Solutions' eBIS provides global property management company CB Richard Ellis with tailored solutions to help drive business efficiency.**

CB Richard Ellis is the world's leading commercial real estate adviser and was recently named one of the 50 'best in class' companies by Business Week. With 24,000 employees operating from 350 offices across 58 countries, the company has more consultants advising more clients than any other property firm. As a result the company is able to deliver to owners, investors and occupiers an intimate knowledge of all classes of real estate in nearly every major market in the world. Services include property sales and leasing; corporate services; facilities and project management; mortgage banking; appraisal and valuation; development services; investment management; and research and consulting. In the UK, CB Richard Ellis has 1700 staff operating across a powerful regional network.

**International company, CB Richard Ellis, used OpenAccounts to streamline it's business**

In 1995, CB Richard Ellis selected and implemented Advanced Business Solutions' OpenAccounts Financials as its accounting software solution for its UK business. The company was keen to make use of e-Business functionality to automate the processing of data and in 2002/3 went live with OpenAccounts'

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- Andrew Self,  
Associate Director

eBIS moving processes such as the registration of clients and projects, the processing of expenses and the generation of invoices all online. It also decided to move to one central source of data and extend access to its 1,650 fee earners and other administration staff.

"The real drivers for putting eBIS in place were that we had growth aspirations, we were quite acquisitive, and were also looking to streamline our processes using workflow", comments Andrew Self, Associate Director at CB Richard Ellis. "Prior to implementing eBIS, everything was heavily paper driven, so as a consequence there were manual errors." The project was split into two phases. The first saw the 800 fee-earners going live on e-BIS, enabling them to have instant online access to key financial details relating to their own areas of responsibility. As a result, fee earners could update job details, register clients and projects and submit expenses.

Phase two of the project saw invoices being drafted online and the migration of data from the bespoke Project Ledger onto the OpenAccounts Project Ledger to facilitate one central source of data. The billing process was automated as a result and the manual 20 step process previously used was cut in half. Once a fee earner decides to bill a client, they enter fees, fee shares, invoice text, invoice address, VAT and advanced disbursement recovery items remotely online.

### eBIS allows for bespoke solutions to meet specific company needs

Advanced Business Solutions' OpenAccounts Financials focuses on adding value to the finance function by making use of business technology to automate standard processes and workflow, not only within finance, but providing self-service facilities across the entire organisation. "For example, tasks such as raising a sales ledger and submitting expenses are all automated through eBIS. In fact, users can do anything they want 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, as long as they can virtually connect onto the network", observes Andrew.

CB Richard Ellis has adapted eBIS for its own particular needs: "We have created a bespoke system - users not only fill in information for the accounting workflow, but they also input information for sub routines not connected with finance, such as money laundering and conflict of interests", comments Andrew.

CB Richard Ellis makes particular use of analysis codes within OpenAccounts to help it tailor the system to its particular requirements. According to Andrew, "at the heart of eBIS there are certain fields which we have created using analysis codes. You can attach codes to a client or department depending on how you want to slice the information held in the system. For example, we have two codes for each department allowing us to display and report information in two different ways.

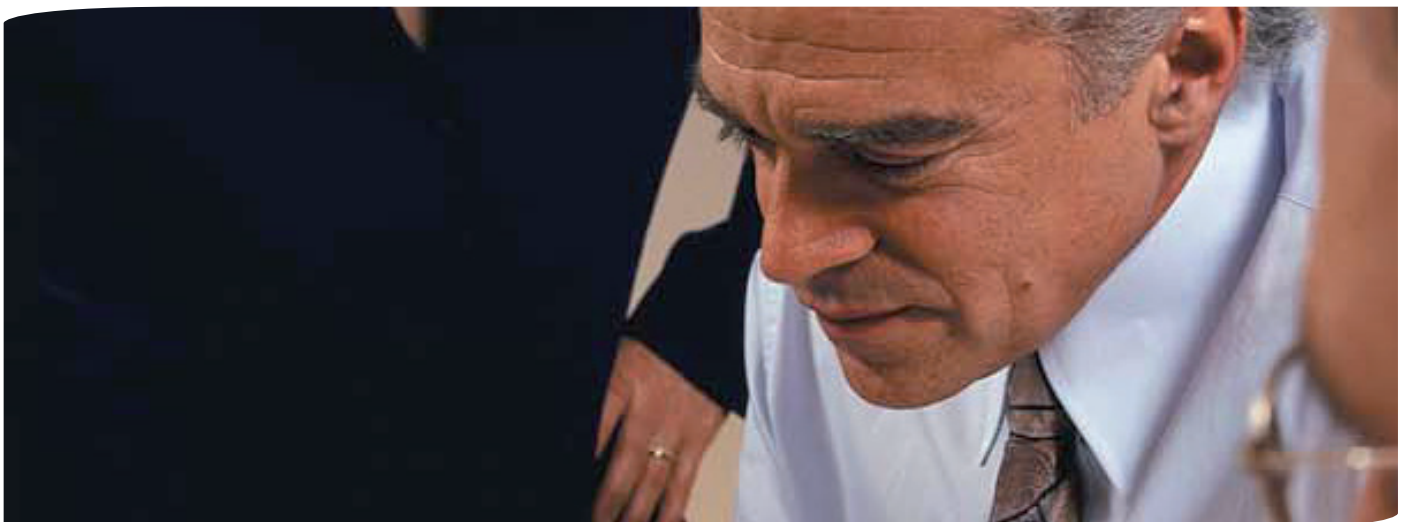
## Potential money laundering and conflicts of Interests easily identified

Andrew explains that procedures have been developed to help protect against the risks of money laundering and conflict of interest in the company's property activities: *"We profile clients and projects using analysis codes which will determine if they are at risk for money laundering. The analysis codes feed into the user work load, a user will allocate a new analysis code for a new client, then profile the nature of the job – whether it is valuation or sales – and the system then determines if there is a money laundering risk. If the system determines that there is a risk, eBIS will display a message asking for further forms to be completed. The user then needs to complete these and have this reviewed before they continue the workflow process."*

*"With the conflict of interest procedure, the system lists all the projects we have worked on and does a comparison with our property database to see if there have been any jobs working on the same property in the last three years. If there is, it creates a form to be manually authorised to ensure we are complying with the property professional's code of conduct."*

## Business development opportunities can be quickly identified

The company also uses analysis codes to help manage business development with key clients. *"We have Client Directors as analysis codes for our key clients – those generating more than £1/2m per annum in fees", notes Andrew. "This means that it is possible to generate reports showing fees by Client and by Director responsible for them. This information is then collated by our marketing department, and forms part of each client's business plan agreed with the Client Director. For core clients this then generates another sub routine, as*



*Client Directors put forward a business plan for the board based on this information. Using the analysis codes in this way provides a platform for us to drive new business and maintain key clients."*

## OpenAccounts provides flexible multi company accounting

One other key benefit of the adaptability of OpenAccounts for CB Richard Ellis has been the ability to utilise the software as a multi company accounting system. *"OpenAccounts is the main back end platform but there are multiple companies set up within it so there is a single point of entry into the system but, for example, forms are populated according to the company the user is part of. eBIS has also allowed for a segregation of duties in that a user's eBIS profile can restrict access to information about the company they work for, even though there are multiple companies on the same platform", Andrew notes.* Future plans for e-Business are widespread as the savings are clear

CB Richard Ellis is broadening its use of OpenAccounts eBIS. It has recently implemented timesheet updating and processing and is just about to go live with a bonus justification procedure: *"Employees submit their request and justification on why they should receive a bonus, this goes against the database and I will then write a report for the board so they can make a decision based on the information available", says Andrew.*

Andrew observes: *"We are using core OpenAccounts back end with eBIS functionality and coming up with a solution that satisfies the business."*

Moving forward, CB Richard Ellis is confident that OpenAccounts and eBIS will continue to adapt to the changing requirements of the differing businesses it operates, providing time and cost savings as it happens. *"We know we have made savings as we are a finance department of 35 people, and have been a department of 35 people for seven years. During that time, the number of staff we account for has trebled, so we have found we can increase the size of the firm without increasing the number of finance staff."*

*"The flexible nature of the application allows us to easily and quickly adapt the system to accommodate changes in business processes. This means we are always well positioned to take advantage of new ideas and opportunities. For example, as an acquisitive business, we have been able to integrate new companies onto our system quickly and efficiently causing no disruption to our business and the newly acquired company", adds Andrew.*

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As an example, whenever CB Richard Ellis acquires new organisations, it typically only takes two weeks for the newly acquired company to become live on the OpenAccounts system. It then takes just six weeks to cleanse the last five years' income data of the company acquired to bring on their clients, projects, property address of the fee, and fee earner. This is necessary to maintain the money laundering, conflict of interest and key clients mentioned above. Invariably no additional licenses are required to support the business expansion.

In 2007, the company began a new drive to deconsolidate, simplifying the arrangement of companies operating within it, which should generate additional time savings in the creation of statutory accounts.

*Andrew concludes: "We have a very good relationship with Advanced Business Solutions. We are like minded companies in that we are both very customer focused. The fact that Advanced Business Solutions not only has a robust technical platform, but also has a great project management team and great technicians working behind it makes the company a potent force in the software industry."*

## About Business Solutions

Advanced Business Solutions, an Advanced Computer Software plc company, provides leading integrated business applications and services that enable public, private and third sector organisations to retain control, improve visibility and gain efficiencies whilst continually improving corporate performance. It's award-winning software systems comprise core financial management, procurement, human resource and payroll systems, integrated with a range of collaborative, document management and business intelligence solutions . It also provides managed and bureau service options.

Advanced Computer Software plc is the UK's leading supplier of software and IT services to the health, care and commercial sectors. It comprises 3 main divisions and has 7000 customers and 800 staff worldwide.

## For more information

Advanced Business Solutions is a brand name of COA Solutions Ltd. registered in England, company number 03214465.

Registered office: Munro House | Portsmouth Road | Cobham | Surrey | KT11 1TF.

t: +44 (0) 08451 606 162 f: +44 (0) 1932 584 001 e: [marketing@advancedcomputersoftware.com](mailto:marketing@advancedcomputersoftware.com) [www.advancedcomputersoftware.com/abs](http://www.advancedcomputersoftware.com/abs)

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