

# NAVY ATTACKS TURNAROUND TIMES FOR REFITTING BRITAIN'S NUCLEAR SUBS

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The Royal Navy and the Warships Support Agency (WSA) have found a way of cutting back on the time taken to refit the UK's nuclear submarines.

Working with Devonport Management Limited at Devonport Royal Dockyard, the WSA has brought in Staffware, to install business process management software in its refit schedules.

The early results have been impressive. The WSA has seen enquiry response times for refit specifications drop from an average of fifteen to just seven days. There are thousands of such enquiries in any particular refit, so the Staffware products have led to significant reductions in refitting timescales, and savings of more than £3 million are predicted over a five year period. It is expected that the investment in Staffware will be recovered within two years, with the resulting efficiency improvements.

Vessels to benefit from this approach have included the nuclear powered submarines HMS Trenchant and HMS Vanguard.

The WSA is responsible for maintaining all Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels, and began to install the Staffware systems in 2001, when they were recommended by LSC, the specialist logistics company involved with the project. The Agency had recognised the urgent need to cut down the time spent in refitting the submarines, to increase accuracy in instructions to contractors and to improve the workflow during the contracts.

Refitting these submarines takes place every ten years. A refit can take up to three years to complete. The process involves standard maintenance plus upgrades of existing equipment to enhance the submarines' capabilities. The Ministry of Defence usually specifies refits up to two years before they are due, issuing a comprehensive specification document to various sub-contractors. This in turn generates thousands of queries which all have to be answered.

In order to achieve the objective of speeding up the process, the WSA decided that it wanted one unified business process system to handle refits from start to finish across all functions. With the help of Staffware products, the existing shipboard, shipyard and subcontractor systems were joined up with combined management and information systems to achieve the desired result.

Mike Owen, Director of Submarines at Devonport, described how Staffware had supported DML. "The WSA has a substantial number of systems and document flows," he said. "We wanted to improve the business process management between the WSA and ourselves at DML to ensure greater efficiency. Full visibility of the supply chain means we can now identify where delays occur, which speeds up our internal processes. This is good news all round, for DML, the Navy and the Ministry of Defence."

John O'Connell, Chairman of Staffware plc, welcomed the new partnership with DML at Plymouth. "The use of workflow technology is not what you would expect to see in the repair of Britain's warships. But it does have the same characteristics as other applications - high value and extreme complexity, involving the collaboration of hundreds of people in many agencies and departments. The resulting

benefits in time and cost saving are now being experienced by our colleagues in DML and LSC, and we are delighted that the Royal Navy is once again being shown to be at the cutting edge of new technology.”