



Refurb Projects
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CENTRE PARC'S GOES ONLINE FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT



Center Parcs has a special place in the minds of many people in the UK. For almost 20 years, the company has been offering just the right mix of relaxation and activity in a natural but safe forest environment to enable families and others to enjoy a worry-free break.

Center Parcs is the UK's leading short break operator and enjoys considerable success with an average of 90 per cent occupancy across its four UK holiday villages and a repeat booking figure of 60 per cent.

As the company is always keen to offer new experiences, its design and development team are always kept busy – a situation set to continue with a fifth village planned (subject to planning permission) for 2008 in Woburn, Bedfordshire.

In keeping with Center Parcs' reputation for innovation, the team has been using Autodesk Buzzsaw online project management and collaboration service for three years now. According to both Center Parcs director of development and engineering Don Camilleri, and CAD technician Ruth Hall, Buzzsaw has been invaluable for managing and controlling its multiple building projects, sharing and tracking all critical information.

Consequently, the team is now practically a paperless operation – while at the same time all documentation is available to any

PC user within the company. "It goes without saying that we get a good return on our investment," says Ruth Hall, "after all, why else would we continue to renew our subscriptions?"

Investment in new technology is often driven by sudden change intensifying the need. This was certainly the case for Center Parcs. Its decision to buy Buzzsaw came after a devastating fire spread through its holiday village at Elveden Forest in Suffolk.

More than 3,000 holidaymakers were moved to safety and, thankfully, there were no casualties. However, the village centre was all but destroyed and there was no alternative but to clear the site and start again.

There were difficult decisions to be made. As Camilleri explains: "Normally, we would take the time to design the new project, go out to full competitive tender and then start the job on site some six to eight months later. However, we had 1,200 staff employed and we didn't want to lose any of our loyal guests by taking longer than absolutely necessary to re-build the village."

By the following winter, the company had to make the decision whether to start taking bookings for the next summer. "As anyone involved in a project such as this will know, it's not easy just to put a date in the diary and say that's when we'll be

finished. But I had to make a decision and committed us to taking our first guests that July," says Camilleri.

Pressure became more intense during a prolonged cold spell when the A11 trunk road – the only main route to the holiday village for supplies – was closed. This meant that once re-building did get started, there was even less time to complete the project than planned.

The target was an ambitious one, and it soon became clear that on-site building work would have to begin before the design was finished and finalised. With a team of eight consultancies, each with around half a dozen people working on the project and over 400 workers on site, one of the biggest challenges was management of project data and information flow.

Ruth Hall takes up the story: "It was at this point that Center Parcs decided to look at Buzzsaw and it was soon obvious that the solution could provide the tight control needed and guarantee correct distribution of information. For example, by using Buzzsaw we could be confident that we were always looking at the latest drawings and so working to the same information."

Buzzsaw allows clients, consultants and contractors to work together in the most effective way by storing and sharing information in one secure, but easily accessible

location on the web. In this way it saves time, reduces risk and maximises profitability by tracking and displaying that latest version of all project documents.

"We had 43 weeks to re-build and the project was costing £45 million, so we were spending over a million pounds a week," continues Camilleri. You make mistakes by using the wrong drawing in a fast-track project such as this and you quickly start to lose money.

"However, I was very pleased that we adopted Buzzsaw as it ensured we kept the right information flowing and kept the project on track."

Thankfully, the dramatic story of Elveden Forest had a happy ending. The hard work and determination – and the investment in Buzzsaw – paid off and the holiday village opened again to guests on the specified date.

However, this was just the beginning for Buzzsaw "It had really proved itself on a highly complex and pressurised project," says Ruth Hall. "For example at Elveden Forest it would not have been unusual to have three sets of people – say, mechanical and heating engineers and the floor specialists – working on the same drawings almost at the same time.

"Thanks to Buzzsaw, the drawings were always up to date and could be sent to different contractors almost instantly. The project was progressing so quickly, that if we had worked in



a traditional way and got the drawings printed and posted to them, they would have been weeks out of date by the time they were received.

“Then there is also the cost element to consider. Printing, especially in colour, can be highly expensive, especially on a large scale.”

Accordingly, Buzzsaw has since been deployed on the major refurbishment of Center Parcs’ Oasis Whinfell Forest village in Cumbria and is currently being used at the planning stages of the new fifth village in Bedfordshire. “Ever since Elveden Forest, Buzzsaw has been vital for all refurbishment and new-build projects,” says Ruth Hall.

The service is also helping streamline maintenance and other ongoing building costs. “Three years ago, it would have been rare to have all project data co-ordinated and filed at the end of a project. After all, most team members are usually already on to the next project and are too busy to be concerned with what had gone before,” she continues.

“Now, once a project is completed all data can be handed

to the technical services team at the relevant Center Parcs village. It’s just like going to a filing cabinet and finding all the correct documentation in one place.

“Also, we can be sure that the data is of good quality. As there is an audit trail we know where it comes from so it can be safely re-used for maintaining the buildings, saving both time and costs.”

It is clear that Buzzsaw is now totally integrated into the work processes at Center Parcs.

“Buzzsaw helped us achieve our goal at Elveden Forest and it continues to help us manage assets by ensuring the right information flows to keep projects on track,” says Ruth Hall.

But what do the others, including contractors, working on different projects think?

“We’ve won round those that were sceptical about Buzzsaw. I haven’t heard anyone say we shouldn’t use it – it has gained the confidence of the team,” says Camilleri.

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