

ROYAL INSTITUTION OF CHARTERED SURVEYORS

Client interview with James Kavanagh, Director Land Group

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) is one of the most respected and high-profile global ‘standards and membership’ organisations for professionals involved in land, property, construction and environmental issues. It has over 120,000 members across 120 countries worldwide.

MANAGING DIVERSE FACULTIES AND FORUMS

“Within the RICS itself we have 160 diverse specialisms, represented across 16 Faculties”, says Land Group Director James Kavanagh. “One of our key functions is to support our Faculties and Forums through the provision of professional industry information and its dissemination to our membership.

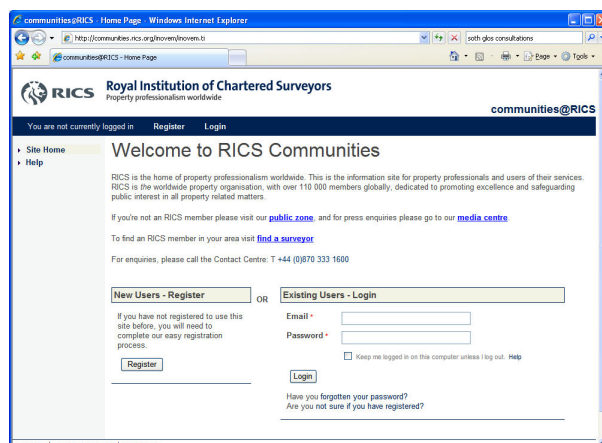
“Given the dispersed nature of our membership, we use significant resources to get various interest groups and committees to collaborate and communicate with each other. Traditionally, most groups can only afford to meet 4 times a year and it is also logistically difficult for our members to work together between meetings.

In order to be more delivery-focussed, RICS needed to find ways to empower membership collaboration and work processes and move away from committee bureaucracy.

“We also needed to allow our members, who are busy people, to be more selective as to how they can actively participate so that we can focus on their skills and specialist knowledge and not bombard them with irrelevant information and requests.

Also wanting to engage younger members and provide them with an opportunity to contribute, they also looked at how technology might help.

“Initially, we tried to improve group communications and feedback through the use some simple email lists. Although useful, these were limited and became difficult to manage. We decided that we needed to invest in an off-the-shelf toolset that would have a range of features to support group collaboration and be easy for our members to use with little or no training”, says James.



WHY RICS CHOSE INOVEM

“We evaluated several ‘groupware’ systems, but some were inappropriate as they required down-loaded plug-ins and were considered too expensive. Although suitable as an enterprise solution, they did not suit the diverse nature of our members’ IT systems over which we have no control.

“We decided to go with INOVEM as their tools seemed very flexible, inexpensive and quick and easy to set up. The team at INOVEM also showed a willingness to work with us to develop usage by our staff and members. This was important given that we needed to experiment with the service, especially in the early stages of the project.

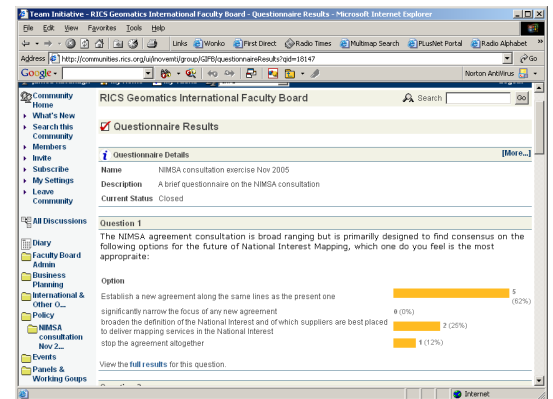
“We also elected to use INOVEM’s hosting service, as this minimised the impact on our IT infrastructure.”

PILOTING, ROLL-OUT AND DEVELOPMENT

RICS decided to reduce the risk by piloting the software within the Geomatics Faculty Board, involving 24 members worldwide, and then roll out the service to other groupings including Planning & Development, Environment, Rural, Minerals & Waste and the rest of the 16 faculties.

“We found that our members appreciated access to group discussions and online surveys, and that they were empowered to upload changes to documents themselves, without having to request the help of an administrator”, says James.

Simple benefits came from the use of shared calendars, ensuring that members were always kept informed of key events and meetings.



“We have also used INOVEM Team Collaboration to support a variety of Panels of specialists looking to collaborate on a specific publication; and an International Presidential Commission discussion on disaster management.”

One of RICS’s key objectives during the early stages was to ensure that the Faculties and Forums support staff felt involved.

“We did not want this to be seen as a big IT project. We invested in staff training to empower them to set up and support online groups, in order that they could facilitate, not administer, membership collaboration. We found the software extremely easy to use and the System Administration function proved very useful as a way to monitor departmental output and member involvement.”

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RESULTS ACHIEVED TO DATE

“The use of INOVEM has become a ‘no brainer’. It saves us time and money and makes the job of group communication so much easier.

“We can now get information out quickly, especially to the international membership, and we have more coherent and interested groups. We have found the service to be very useful in getting general agreement before meetings and it has allowed us to focus membership involvement and reduce the time we spend on less important issues as well as exposing those members who volunteer but don’t contribute.

“The key change is that our members now find it easier to collaborate and to produce materials which reduce the administrative burden on the Secretariat, so they can make better use of their professional skills.

“The online service has not eliminated the need for face-to-face meetings, but it certainly helps to make them more effective and ensures members are better prepared.”

WHERE NEXT?

“We are now getting a lot of interest to use the service from our International members and Regional RICS groups. Our approach will be to allow them to take ownership locally but we will provide central support and act as the key liaison with INOVEM to ensure that the service evolves to support our business needs.

“We have found that rather than pushing this solution onto people it is better to have members ‘pull’ on us and request to use it. This increases the sense of ownership and, with it, the chance of success.

“We’re also considering using INOVEM to support our Assessment of Professional Competence and also links with universities and academics in the developing world.”

“The use of a web based communication suite has dramatically changed for the better the way in which we work; we are more efficient and can respond to issues promptly and with less impact on our daily activities”.

Rob Mahoney, Chairman of RICS Faculties and Forums

LET’S GET TOGETHER

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