NHS

South Tees Hospitals

NHS Foundation Trust
Case Study

black marble

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Black Marble brings integration expertise to healthcare to improve the reliability of critical services.

Part of the NHS Foundation Trust, South Tees Hospital (www.southtees.nhs.uk) is the largest hospital trust in the Tees Valley, where its workforce of almost 9,000 provides a range of specialist regional services to 1.5million people, with expertise in heart disease, trauma, neurosciences, renal services, cancer services and spinal injuries.

Business Needs

The Trust is a market leader in specialist health systems, many of which require access to patient administration records.

Many of their systems support the Health Level 7 EDI Protocol (HL7) but utilise different versions, which presented interoperability challenges when integrating these systems together. The Trust identified that implementing an Enterprise Middleware Broker would resolve these issues and furthermore allow the Trust to integrate with non-HL7 compliant systems.

South Tees had an existing bespoke integration solution in place, which their internal team maintained diligently in the face of day to day requirements changes and support issues but realised a more long-term and sustainable solution was required to replace it. With minimal experience in Enterprise Middleware software they sought experts to provide confidence and support in this endeavour. South Tees went through a tender process to engage with the best UK Microsoft BizTalk experts.

Why Black Marble

The technical team at South Tees, whilst possessing an excellent grasp of domain knowledge in their systems and a great degree of general technical proficiency, only had a high-level skillset in designing and building Enterprise Middleware Broker based integration solutions and wanted the reassurance a partner with in-depth expertise could provide for them.

Black Marble has an internationally recognised team of integration experts and a proven track record of delivering and supporting BizTalk implementations. Add to this our status as a Microsoft Gold partner of more than 15 years, Black Marble stood out amongst the competition, easily being able to provide the experienced technical experts in the field that South Tees required. Black Marble were able to provide:

- Application planning and review services, bringing a fresh perspective to existing efforts and providing design guidance and strategic longer-term recommendations as part of South Tees adoption of BizTalk.
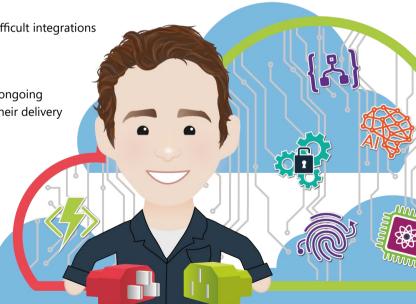
- Low level technical expertise such as assisting in completing difficult integrations with applications with esoteric connectivity requirements.

- Expertise with EDI protocols such as HL7.

Based on their BizTalk expertise, Black Marble were also engaged ongoing development, consultancy and migration services to ensure that their delivery met best practices and optimised BizTalk capabilities.

Solution

The Trust identified that BizTalk was the solution that best fit their integration needs. The Trust embarked on the first stage implementation between their patient administration system and other key applications. Black Marble worked with the Trust to provide BizTalk installation services, with an initial project upgrading to BizTalk 2010 and subsequently to BizTalk 2016.

Knowledge Sharing

The team at Black Marble worked closely with the South Tees team, providing expert knowledge transfer, ensuring South Tees would be comfortable internally supporting increasingly ambitious development efforts independently and administering their day to day BizTalk operations with confidence.

The South Tees team found the working relationship ensured a smooth transition of responsibilities, and they were so happy with the approach, it resulted in a long running engagement, that is still in place today.

Benefits

As a Hospital Trust, there are critical systems that are dependent on the solution, and Black Marble has helped ensure these are running reliably, enabling the Trust to support its staff and patients on a day to day basis.

Plus, from a technical perspective, utilising BizTalk and the Enterprise Service Bus (ESB) toolkit allowed the Trust to benefit from:

- Increased data consistency - Integration between systems removed the need to re-key information in downstream systems.

- Loss of data risk reduction - Operational monitoring of integrations between systems ensured that any faults could be proactively resolved without loss of any critical data.

- Reduced development cost - Utilising HL7 and MLLP (Minimum Lower Layer Protocol) capabilities of BizTalk significantly reduced the complexity of integration with HL7 compliant systems.

Current Work

As part of an on-going relationship, Black Marble continue to work with the Trust to:

- Deliver ongoing BizTalk infrastructure and development consultancy.

- Support in undertaking a BizTalk 2010 to 2016 migration.

- Deliver CI/CD improvements through the adoption of BizTalk Deployment Framework to enable robust and timely deployments using Azure DevOps Pipelines.

Testimonials

" Black Marble demonstrated from the off that they were not only a brilliant technical company, but also that culturally, ethically and personally, they were a great fit the South Tees Trust team. I was delighted with the team's professional approach, and our continuing working relationship with them is testament to that approach. "

Ian Hindmarch, South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundations Trust

" At Black Marble, we always do our utmost to provide the best possible service to our customers, but the added pressure of delivering against life-saving, critical systems really focuses the mind, and I was delighted to be able to ensure a great outcome for South Tees. "

Consultant, Black Marble

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