

Remit Case Study 1: LaSalle Investment Management (Europe)

It's an inevitable part of business life that, over time, clients will want more for less money. This is never truer than in these times of recession, when competition grows even fiercer. You can hold the line on price – and run the risk of becoming uncompetitive – or you can find ways of becoming more efficient.

LaSalle Investment Management's European operation was faced with exactly that challenge, and was looking for ways of doing more work at the price that clients now demand. However, this additional work needed to be done by the same number of people: LaSalle needed to increase efficiency.

Susan Lloyd-Hurwitz, the Managing Director for Europe, and Jamie Lyon, European Finance & Operations Director, kicked off by identifying the key areas of their operations that could clearly be improved across the firm's six European offices.

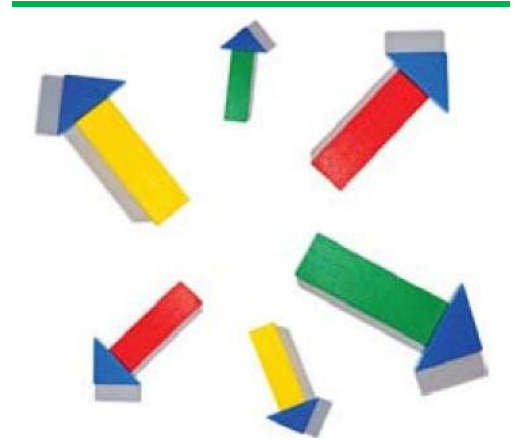
As a large, international firm, the assets under management were split between a dozen or so property managers, each on different contracts, delivering a different service and with a different LaSalle relationship contact. This was clearly not an efficient way of managing the process.

"Our asset managers and controllers were spending too much time managing detail. Information from all the property managers was coming through in a variety of formats with differing degrees of quality and success; moreover, we still didn't always have the information we needed. This meant that our people were not doing enough of what they are really skilled at – managing the portfolio and adding value to our clients," [Lloyd-Hurwitz says](#).

It was clear that LaSalle needed to reduce the number of suppliers it was working with, standardise on a limited number of contracts, improve the quality of the service delivery and hold the property managers more accountable.

This initiative was one of a whole package of efficiency measures designed to make LaSalle a more cost-effective company across Europe. In London, they moved offices to their current One Curzon Street location, for instance, bringing their space per person down to 10 square metres.

In addition, making their current management systems more efficient was a major priority because it would actually improve the way the firm worked, not just lower its costs. "It should also make everyone's job better, as they could concentrate on their core skills, not on administration," [points out Lloyd-Hurwitz](#).



"We didn't want to just impose this from above, though, and end up with it being seen as the 'British solution' that wouldn't work in other countries," [says Lyon](#).

"We wanted to involve our staff in the process across our European platform – get it done thoroughly but as quickly as possible."

The company wanted to move quickly on the change, so they brought in Remit Consulting as the project managers for their process for two major reasons:

- Remit's international staff allowed it to interact with the different European offices in their native tongues;
- Remit's existing library of processes and standard contracts could be applied immediately to LaSalle's needs.

"Remit was also chosen since they had helped us three years earlier on a very successful UK initiative" added Lyon.

With Lyon, Remit's team ran a series of cross-office workshops over three months, bringing together people from across LaSalle's various European offices. The groups worked through existing supplier contract relationships and started to standardise service delivery around a smaller number of qualified partners, with simpler, but stronger, contracts and new, higher standards set for reporting.

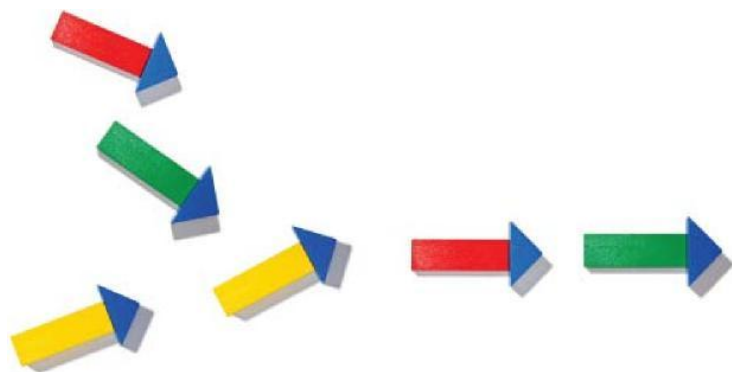
"We needed some successes early on" says Lloyd-Hurwitz. "People really had to feel that we could achieve something with this process. Bringing in a team who were experienced with change management and could show us how to implement things quickly really helped that."

The deeper the teams drilled into the existing platform and structure, the more opportunities for improvement and simplification were found. Standard definitions for the same concepts made cross-office comparisons easier to make and paved the way to standardise process and build a very scalable platform.

LaSalle also came to see that their different markets were not quite as diverse as they expected, as standardised definitions led to a better database of properties, in turn allowing for more efficient analysis and comparison. Asset managers, who initially were sceptical about the extent of the opportunities for immediate and increased improvement, very soon came around to see the benefits of the process as improvements in revised data flow, timing and quality were captured and systems fell into place.

"Part of the benefit was just getting people from the different countries into one room working together," says Lyon.

"They built relationships that made future co-operation easier and these relationships continue today."



"Remit really addressed the detail of the information that we needed to run the operations day-to-day and helped us implement that," says Lyon.

"They're not the kind of consultants who come in, give you the view from 40,000 feet and then leave you to work out the details."

The end result was a significantly smaller number of property managers but they now play a far more important part in the execution and growth of the LaSalle business. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and LaSalle's asset managers have been freed up to focus on adding value.



LaSalle now has a streamlined database of assets under management, with a common reporting dashboard to be added next quarter that gives LaSalle's staff very visual and complete information that they need in order to make good decisions quickly and efficiently for their clients. Lloyd-Hurwitz's twin goals of making the staff more productive, but also making the job more rewarding were both successfully hit.

The property management contracts were re-tendered by Lyon and the reduced number benefited the property managers too, with each getting more work from LaSalle, allowing a better price model. This additional efficiency can be passed back to LaSalle's clients, achieving the original objective

Lyon added that the business can now take on more work without having to add extra staff and is increasingly confident in the efficiency of the platform as they win more business.

"In the end, it gave the whole company confidence that we could implement change effectively, for the benefit of both ourselves and our clients," says Lloyd-Hurwitz. "That was a hugely beneficial, but an unexpected bonus from the process and one that continues today, one year on."

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