

DLF has pioneered townships and group housing in India and has to its credit over 224 million square feet of existing development projects and 748 million square feet of planned projects

IT Is The Brick And Mortar Of The DLF Group

Here's a saga of a well-known infrastructure developer that has used technology to lay a strong foundation for all its ventures and processes.

"An enterprising person is one who drives through an old decrepit part of town and sees a new housing development."

These words of Jim Rohn, an American entrepreneur, author, and motivational speaker, aptly describe the vision, enterprise and farsightedness of DLF Ltd, resulting in the success story that it is today.

Over the years, the group has become a name to reckon with in the domain of contemporary urban development and housing across the country, with many urban landmarks to its credit. The core business has traditionally been the development of three prime divisions: homes, offices and shopping malls. But over time the group has diversified into different verticals, establishing partnerships with organisations in the field of education, healthcare and hospitality services. The company has also entered into several strategic alliances with global industry leaders.

"The landmark achievements so far have been on the merit of the synergistic strengths of good architecture, appropriate designs, impressive aesthetics and safety features that the firm has incorporated in each of its development projects," affirms Mahesh Mathur, vice president-Systems, DLF Ltd.

IT is at the core of development

The group's journey of over 60 years is marked by the adoption of several of IT

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best practices.

The company uses several software to automate and digitise different operations like auto-cad for designing; software for project monitoring; and the Microsoft Exchange mailing solution for communication. The group uses video conferencing at all major offices. The company's website is also search engine optimised.

To maintain a swift workflow, DLF kept developing different in-house IT applications as well. The company also deployed a well-known ERP package—Oracle Financial (a core financial module) for its corporate office, reveals Mathur.

A few pain points

"Automation was in place for all functions ...there was an application for services/maintenance billing, another for management reporting; yet another for HR and payroll accounting, etc," reveals Mathur.

Though these software applications did wonderfully for their respective processes, they developed into islands of applications leading to duplication of data, factual discrepancies, and disjointed processes. The management realised that these applications were good only when they were restricted to a particular business/vertical and were hampering the exponential growth that the organisation was otherwise achieving.

Mathur shares another need that was not addressed by the existing applications: "Our customers are

engaged with us from the time they buy/procure a property on rent to the time they ultimately sell-off the property or vacate the rented accommodation... this is usually a pretty long span. So we need to keep histories of all the transactions that take place with them during this period. But with our existing applications we were not able to keep track and have a systematic record/complete history of each customer on-the-fly. Besides, many a time we came across discrepancies in the data collated from different sources/ applications."

With the increase in DLF's physical locations and diversification into different verticals, there was a pressing need for a unified/integrated ERP application that could give a comprehensive view of the organisational operations, providing critical information, instantaneously—in relation to any of its customer or stakeholders.

An ERP solution that resolved it all!

To address this challenge and close the organisational gaps, by



Mahesh Mathur, vice president-Systems, DLF Ltd

"The Ramco ERP solution has eliminated the operational/data redundancies, enhanced the flow of information, and has thus significantly improved productivity and profitability."

Landmarks achieved over time

DLF has pioneered townships and group housing in India. The group also has the distinction of pioneering the development of integrated townships through the right mix of quality housing designs, IT parks, state-of-the-art offices and shopping malls. Each township has a provision for digital entertainment, leisure and recreation, efficient infrastructure like schools, along with hospitals and other community spaces like parks and clubs. The group has a large network of dedicated direct sales agents and works in close proximity with financing institutions, top architects and the finest network of experienced contractors and suppliers.

For more on the group, check out: www.dlf.in

A glance at the IT infrastructure at DLF

- Autocad for architectural designing
- Software for project monitoring
- Microsoft exchange mailing solution
- Video conferencing
- Ramco's ERP solution
- Ramco Virtual Works 2.0 and Microsoft SQL Server 2005 to run the ERP software
- Company website: www.dlf.ins

early 2006 DLF started exploring for a good ERP solution that could bring all processes on to a single platform. The management evaluated many options available in the market



Chetan Pathak, vice president, Enterprise Solutions, India, Ramco Systems

“To migrate 15 years of legacy data residing across the 710 companies, 853 organisation units and 2210 finance books of DLF was a humongous task. But Ramco accomplished the daunting project successfully, dealing with each complexity head-on.”

but after a careful analysis, zeroed down on Ramco's ERP solution.

Mathur shares his experience: “While exploring different options we realised the complexities that existed at our end. Even Ramco didn't have a ready-made solution to address all of our challenges. But the technology that they were using put them in a better position to come up with a solution that now seems just perfect for our needs.”

The complexities

“To migrate 15 years of legacy data residing across the 710 companies, 853 organisation units and 2210 finance books of DLF was a humongous task. But Ramco accomplished the daunting project successfully, dealing with each complexity head-on,” says Chetan Pathak, vice president, Enterprise Solutions, India, Ramco Systems.

The project was implemented in multiple phases for various companies doing different businesses under the DLF brand. The first roll out happened in February 2007, and the implementation across the board for all modules got completed in February 2008.

Dealing with employee resistance

The decision to effect the implementation in a phased manner

was also prompted by another motive. The management wanted to first sell the benefits of the platform, internally, amongst its employees.

Mathur shares, “The initial resistance was expected from the employees, so to deal with it we decided to always take our workforce along with us. We did a phased roll out/implementation and in the process identified the users who needed to be convinced and addressed.

“The effort paid off. After the second roll out there was a feeling of comfort within the organisation... over a 100 users were already using the application, so the next set of 50 users were not that uncomfortable as they had begun receiving a positive feedback from earlier users.”

The deployment now covers most of DLF's business processes, says Mathur.

The ROI

While Mathur thinks it is too soon to comment on the ROI as the implementation has been a very recent development, on the basis of the initial experience he observes that the deployment has helped DLF. He elaborates: “The solution has eliminated the operational/ data redundancies, enhanced the flow of information, and has thus significantly improved productivity

and profitability.”

Pathak enumerates some of the key functionalities that the ERP solution is offering: “The platform offers service billing, which includes the generation of bills for maintenance, water and electricity charges; mall leasing and corporate leasing; retail and residential sales; construction procurement and payables; promotional/deferred revenue billing, etc.” The solution has been developed using Ramco Virtual Works 2.0 and SQL Server 2005.

As regards the future, Mathur says that there are plans to have a few more implementations done, related to business intelligence (BI) and CRM (customer relationship management) added to the platform to enhance the management reporting and communication with customers. Mathur adds, “Over 300 users are already working on some ERP module or the other. The count will go up further when the BI and CRM modules are deployed.”

The journey ahead!

DLF is an organisation that likes to keep pace with the times and do all that it takes to stay ahead and add to the goodwill that it has earned over the years. The key to its success lies in the fact that it keeps a tab on the needs of its stakeholders (which comprise business users, end users, and its workforce) and leverages IT to address these challenges and requirements. With this commitment to deliver nothing short of the best, we are sure DLF will continue to scale up further and touch even higher peaks of success. ■

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