



BRISTOW GROUP'S INVESTMENT IN IFS APPLICATIONS REDUCES COSTS & IMPROVES AIRCRAFT AVAILABILITY

Bristow Group Inc., one of the world's largest providers of helicopter services to the offshore energy industry, has restructured its business management information systems to provide an integrated IT platform capable of supporting Bristow's global operations now and in the future.

A core element of the integrated IT platform is the implementation of a new ERP system, IFS Applications. Now operational, IFS Applications is providing a unified source of information covering financial, supply chain management and aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul.

Benefits are already being realised in improved aircraft availability through better control of inventory. By enabling the more efficient use of working capital, the multi-million pound investment has improved Bristow's flight operations in the highly competitive offshore helicopter services industry.

IMPLEMENTATION

IFS Applications was installed in three stages over a four-year period starting in 2001. Implementation of the Financials module was fairly straightforward and was completed within 12 months of start. A deciding factor in the choice of IFS was its success in military aviation and its ongoing commitment to developing a commercial aviation solution. The IFS initiative in the area of commercial aviation was developed in partnership with Bristow as a number of modifications were required to accommodate Bristow's requirements specific to its offshore helicopter operations. Many of these modifications were subsequently incorporated into IFS' standard software. Specific features developed for Bristow included the valuation of inventory and the capability of managing rotatable components that must be removed for refurbishment after a designated number of flying hours.

Bristow started using the supply chain modules in 2002, initially in the USA and then in the UK during 2003. Roll-out has been completed company-wide and the modules are now operational in 37 locations around the world.

Following on completion of the supply chain phase, the aircraft maintenance modules entered service in Europe in 2005. These modules are now operational at Bristow bases in Aberdeen and Norwich in the UK, Den Helder in Holland, and at bases of Norsk Helikopters in Norway, an affiliated company. Other locations where the maintenance modules are being used include operations in Nigeria, Australia and the USA, and emphasis is now on adding other locations to the network.

ABOUT BRISTOW GROUP

Bristow Group Inc. is a major provider of helicopter transportation services to the oil and gas industry worldwide. Through its subsidiaries, affiliates and joint ventures, Bristow provides transportation services in most oil and gas producing regions including the US Gulf of Mexico and Alaska, the North Sea, Africa, Mexico, South America, Australia, Russia, Egypt and the Far East. Additionally, Bristow is a leading provider of production management services for oil and gas production facilities in the US Gulf of Mexico.



“In addition to the implementation of IFS Applications, we embarked on a major programme to rationalise our business procedures in order to take full advantage of the advanced functionality of the new system, not only in terms of automation, but also with regard to information availability,” explains Vice President of Information Management, Mike Meyer.

“Information is now immediately available to users throughout the world, whenever they need it. This is one area where we are realising the tremendous benefits of the new system. All of our operations are working off the same set of information real-time which means that decisions are based on the most accurate information currently available. Our effectiveness in dealing with AOG (“Aircraft on Ground”) situations, for example, has improved significantly and has allowed for faster response than ever existed in the past,” said Meyer.

INTEGRATION

IFS Applications is also integrated with Bristow’s proprietary flight operations system “INTOPS”. This system was developed to capture the flying hours for each helicopter. Flight information details cascade down through the helicopter structure held in IFS, enabling Bristow’s engineering department to plan the appropriate maintenance support activities for each aircraft well in advance. This is critical to maintaining maximum operational availability because many key components may have lead times of up to six months or more. IFS Applications working in conjunction with INTOPS helps ensure that the correct replacement parts are available when and where they are required.

The same IT infrastructure network is being used to view maintenance manuals online. Now managed centrally, these manuals can be easily updated and disseminated immediately throughout the organisation worldwide. And as key parts or components are withdrawn from service, those that are obsolete can be identified more readily so that appropriate action can be taken.

BENEFITS

Taking into account the financial benefits achieved in terms of increased productivity and profitability, Bristow expects to see a payback on its investment in IFS Applications by the end of 2007. Meyer said, “One of the most important operational measures is aircraft availability, and this area has improved for the company because the maintenance and re-supply process is better organised and planned today than before this system was implemented.”

“Geography is no longer as significant an issue in managing our worldwide operations from an IT standpoint. Use of IFS Applications has reduced our re-supply lead times by about half,” added Meyer. “Further, despite increased flight hours from strong market demand for our services, inventory levels are generally lower and the introduction of more automation has reduced processing overhead. Also, the workload of our administrative staff has been reduced, enabling personnel to be redeployed into more productive roles.”

Meyer concluded, “We are pleased with the new IFS system. Looking ahead, we anticipate that the new system will be capable of supporting Bristow’s future business activities because we believe it is an IT platform that can be adapted to meet the company’s needs as they change over time.”

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- All operations now work from the same set of real-time information
- Aircraft availability improved
- Integrated with the company’s proprietary flight operations system to plan MRO activities
- Lower inventory levels
- Workload of administrative staff reduced



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