

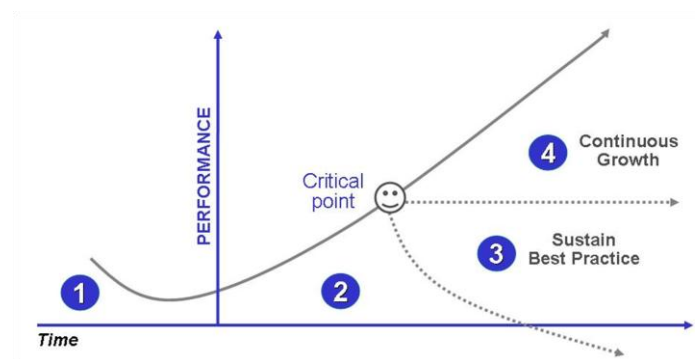
SofTools web-applications

SofTools web-based software applications deliver two core dimensions of sustainable performance improvement:

- 1) Give the key decision makers increased visibility and control over operational performance, and
- 2) Enable operators of all core processes to consistently apply best practice techniques.



SofTools applications are used by corporate and public sector clients to dramatically improve performance in core operational and enabling processes. Typical outputs include improved effectiveness and efficiency, reduced costs and improved time-to-market. These advance applications also embed the principles of the business management and continuous improvement cycle: **Plan** - definition of strategy and operational activities, **Execute** - effectiveness and efficiency in implementation, **Reflect** - monitoring, reporting and analysis, and **Learn** - continuous improvement & knowledge management.



Traditional approaches to performance improvement typically result in short-term gains [from 1 to 2], but performance fall off after the initiative has lost focus can be dramatic - resulting in little or no long-term performance improvement. Furthermore, the failure to link new skills to business processes and technical systems guarantees a poor return on the investment. To survive and grow in the current economic climate requires a different approach.

SofTools offer a leading-edge technology platform and portfolio of software solutions that sustain performance over the long-term and create a culture of continuous learning and growth [3 & 4] - whether in the field of business planning, sales delivery, project and programme management, or analytic trouble-shooting.

Business-Benefit Analysis

The following tables identify the core components and functions of the SofTools solution aligned to desired business benefits.

Strategic alignment & priority

Desired business benefits	SofTools core functionality	MS Excel Spreadsheet
Provides single view of prioritised cost reduction projects (portfolio). Strategic visibility and control.	Portfolio display as a single table on home page and reports	No graphic display function
Shows current business imperatives and any Cost Improvement Programme (CIP). Why are we doing these projects and what is the strategic goal?	Dynamic links to organisation's KPIs (and those of the PCT or SHA) and where projects are against plan	Insert notes can be created for each cell but this is time consuming and isn't dynamic
Users can view projects by project type (cost reduction, revenue generation, one off, recurring, etc.) to enable management to balance types of projects overall	User defined real-time reports – using reference field classification defined by the Trust	Rows and columns can be manipulated to create 'reports'
Users can view projects by phase (Identification, implementation, Savings Realisation etc.) to track progress of the whole portfolio.	User defined real-time reports – using reference field classification	n/a (user can update field on a case by case basis)
Enables quick and easy drill down into detail, where required to identify where individual projects may be held up.	Easy access through hyperlinks to individual projects (if required)	n/a
Calculates and recalculates project priority and automatically updates portfolio views to reflect the ever changing priorities of PCTs and SHA	Refreshes screens using real-time data	n/a

Senior Management Visibility

Desired business benefits	SofTools core functionality	MS Excel Spreadsheet
Configurable reporting for different roles and individuals to give the information required at the point it is required. Minimises the burden of data overload on individuals.	User can define and create personal reports as required	Rows and columns can be manipulated to create simple 'reports'

Reports updated in real time without third party intervention minimising support costs and use of consultants.	Real time creation from the projects database	n/a
No duplication of data entry for Project Managers and other key resources (e.g. Finance)	Single point of entry with multiple access as required. Interface with external systems as required	Users have to wait for access to Master spreadsheet. Data often duplicated
Reports constructed around numerical and / or exception reporting	User defined status reports – including open items and project risk register	Rows and columns can be manipulated to create simple 'reports'
Real time access anytime, anywhere (including remote) facilitating home working and access from other sites (e.g. other hospitals, PCTs or SHA offices)	Web based requiring browser only (IE5+) which is standard within the NHS	Not available
Reports on project issues and identifies where and from whom assistance is required	Red and amber open item reporting – including action planning (who, when)	Not available

Project Management Support

Desired business benefits	SofTools core functionality	MS Excel Spreadsheet
Provides simplicity of one common set of documents for each project ensuring a common best-practice standard	Project folders contain all project documentation based on pre-defined templates	Often no standard within spreadsheets as users change format
Project data automatically sets project priority within the portfolio	Automatic application of user defined prioritisation criteria – updates portfolio screens real-time	Not available
Provides easily accessible links to other relevant documentation (e.g. MS project files, research decks, meeting minutes, PowerPoint etc.)	Dynamic links to other project data using pre-defined key word tagging	Not available
Effectively communicates project data – upwards to project sponsors , sideways to other project managers and downwards to the project team	Status reports and project documents can be available in open read-only format	Communicates only to those to whom the spreadsheet is actively emailed
Clarifies decision points and facilitates efficient decision making	Predefined templates define decision points and sign-off levels. Decision criteria can be built into decision points	Not available
Enables new Project Managers to pick up new or transferred projects immediately	Common framework and method for project management and control	Excel spreadsheet often need explanation by creator or use of accompanying notes



Makes life easier for project managers by providing standardised templates, simplifying communication and on line support	Extensive team member and online 'community' based support functions	Spreadsheet can create a 'template'
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Consistent application of best business practice

Desired business benefits	SofTools core functionality	MS Excel Spreadsheet
Minimise learning time to get new Brand Managers up and running on new projects	Common framework and learning is supported through the on line coach	Excel spreadsheet often need explanation by creator or use of accompanying notes
Uses rules and guidelines to support the quality of data entry	Online coach and 'best practice' examples	Limited to insert notes or accompanying information
Provides effective learning and support when and where it is needed	Online coach reflects preferred user learning styles – from activist to reflector	n/a
Supports common approach across teams, enabling remote project team management and minimising "learning curve" time	Best practice interactive templates tailored to reflect client processes. Standard glossary of terms (jargon)	Spreadsheet can create a 'template'
Tailors on-line support through understanding current user issues	Online resources can be added and linked to individual processes as required	Not available
Provides expert support in specific project management techniques –such as Prince2 (as required)	System captures standard processes and defined best-practice tools	Not available
Enables World Class project management capability through effective capture and dissemination of intellectual capital	System captures insights and Frequently-Asked-Questions from experts and makes available to the rest of the team	Not available
Provides a base level of project management and cost reduction (and general business) knowledge	Addition of online finance and project reports produced by international business authors	Not available
Shares cost saving best practice across Project Managers	User defined forums facilitate ideas exchange and capture of intellectual capital within Trust and NHS	Not available
Captures and shares finance and project management insights as and when identified	Insight capture process with key word search capability	Not available
Enables effective post project evaluation to improve next phase of project classification and planning	Lessons-to-Learn folder captures learning points, and reuse is triggered through interactive templates	Not available



Efficient Resource Management

Desired business benefits	SofTools core functionality	MS Excel Spreadsheet
Maintains a user base of project resource	User names and contact details available within the system	Not available
Captures and shares expert profiles	Expertise associated with specific users, and expert search capability	Not available
Leverages expert knowledge whilst minimising expert loading	Ask-an-Expert capability makes expert documents, links, insights etc available with single click	Not available
Ability to allocate people to projects at the top level of detail	Top level resource management capability and reporting	Not available
Reduces duplication of effort or 'reinventing the wheel'	Extensive reuse of templates, plans, insights, decisions etc.	Not available. Duplicates effort by its very nature
Re-uses and evolves effective plans	Ability to classify projects as 'best practices' for reference and re-use by others	'Cut and paste' option available
Updates resource profile as charters are approved	Top level resource reports based on user % loading on a month-to-month basis	Not available

Ease of use

Desired business benefits	SofTools core functionality	MS Excel Spreadsheet
Attractive overall look and feel – not simply 'forms on a database'	Graphic interface and web-based look and feel – 'enabling not enforcing'	Basic spreadsheet package. Customisation time consuming and difficult to maintain
Instant online support provided in a flexible way that reflect different learning styles	Three levels of user help built into the system – Conceptual help, Ask-an-Expert and the Virtual Consultant	Not available
Each user can get to their "favourite" places in the process quickly	"My page" functionality learns user needs and provides fast access to current work	Not available

Scalable, flexible and easy-to-use platform

Typical software applications develop functionality based on what is technically possible – often resulting in products that have little impact on performance and significant resistance from users. SofTools follow a development principle of ‘simplicity’ and ‘business focus’, and are committed to a systematic market-driven process of continuous platform innovation and improvement.

SofTools applications can be installed on client (intranet) servers, or can be hosted on a secure client server based in the SofTools London data centre. Once set-up, client administrators have control over site administration and settings. Internet hosting has the advantage of allowing easy access for support purposes and to facilitate the quarterly upgrade process.

Over an intensive six year development period the SofTools platform has evolved from use of simple Excel templates to a full thin-client web-based open platform, utilising the latest proven Microsoft and Oracle back-end database engines. The core of the platform is therefore scalable, flexible, easy-to-use, provides anywhere anytime access, and ‘future-proof’.

