

Royal Fleet Auxiliary Case Study

Effective forecasting, resourcing, and understanding of deployment, tracking and crew use with the industry leading force optimisation solution



Challenges

The UK's Royal Fleet Auxiliary is an integral part of the Royal Navy. With a current fleet of 13 ships, the RFA is tasked to supply fuel, equipment, ammunition and food to Royal Navy warships: thus, enabling maintenance of their capability during training and deployment. The RFA also provides aviation support for the Royal Navy, together with amphibious support and secure sea transport for Royal Marine and Army units and their equipment. The RFA fleet includes tankers, stores ships, amphibious support ships, and an Aviation Support ship which includes a casualty reception facility.

Over time the RFA has developed into a complex multi-purpose flotilla, currently employing approximately 2,000 civilian officers and ratings. It continues to be one of the largest employers in the British shipping industry. Personnel follow the similar training paths of their Merchant Navy counterparts, with additional military and equipment courses specific to the Royal Navy.



“Allocate Solutions have enabled us to tailor bespoke applications to improve efficiency of our business.”

Liza Buckingham,
Head of RFA Personnel Strategy,

Solution

Fleet management requires the effective planning, deployment, tracking and utilisation of crews. The implementation of a common solution, both ashore and afloat, has ensured consistency in the management of personnel, providing accurate, real-time information. As a Business-Critical Application, Allocate have provided the RFA with an industry leading workforce optimisation solution that can help them plan for today, tomorrow and beyond.

Benefits

Implementing Allocate Solutions workforce planning software provided the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) with a number of key operational benefits, including:

- Real-time visibility and accuracy of crew competencies - enabling the RFA to appoint the correct person to the correct post/billets linked to training requirements; thus, increasing operational efficiency
- More effective forward planning of crew requirements; helping individuals to plan their own lives with greater certainty, resulting in improved morale
- A clearer view of the training needs of each and every seafarer; meaning the RFA can proactively manage, plan and advance careers
- MOD Approved Cash Accounting functionality: ensuring each vessel follows government financial policy and submits monthly electronic and hard copy auditable accounts
- Reducing paper-based and manual processes, administrative burdens and optimising internal resources, leading to a more rewarding working day for Allocate Solutions users
- Improved management reporting; helping to drive the RFA's strategic decisions.

Outcomes

The RFA has been using Allocate Solutions since 1998 to meet their workforce optimisation planning and operational challenges. The application supports many areas of human resource management, both ashore and afloat, including the appointing of RFA seafarers to the correct billets. Data replication is a critical feature that ensures the onboard personnel administration is maintained without having to duplicate data input. Allocate is used to ensure that the vessels' databases are fully replicated to the hub at HQ, and that all locations are working with the most recent data.

Managing personnel and financial data whilst at sea, Allocate workforce planning solutions controls on board HR, immigration and vaccination data, and operational capability including competence shortfalls. It is also responsible for MOD Cash Accounting, including crew accounts and the generation of reports of individual expenditure. This ensures the correct deductions are made from payroll. At a strategic level, the system is used to view trends and future requirements for the RFA. This greatly improved visibility enables the RFA to adjust policies and recruitment; ensuring that it will have sufficient crew, with the suitable skills, to man the fleet of the future.

Staff Testimonial

One of the key success factors for the RFA is that the implementation of Allocate Solutions is not just seen as a 'systems implementation'. With the support of Allocate's dedicated project team, the RFA is responsible for managing the alignment of Allocate application, with their future business processes.

RFA staff have commented that the adoption of Allocate Solutions has:

- Significantly improved the appointing process
- Enhanced operational efficiency
- Optimised training planning
- Enabled forward planning for the seafarer helping to maintain crew morale.

Building on success

When the RFA needed to strengthen their end user support due to staff retirement and return to sea commitments, Allocate demonstrated that Managed Services can be very cost effective when compared with the cost of recruitment, training and replacing in-house support teams. Allocate has experience in setting up on-site 1st line support and quickly set about replacing unsupported tools with new, modern applications that aid end users, improve upgrades and ensure the support process continues to be efficient. The Allocate Managed Services team made it their priority to meet the users and help them utilise the system effectively. By bringing their knowledge and experience to the RFA, Allocate have helped the team become productive and learn new ways of utilising the system.

Future

The long-term relationship between the RFA and Allocate means that both organisations understand each other's strengths and working practices. Any enhancements to Allocate's workforce planning solution, easily achieved through its inherent flexibility and structure, can now be identified and implemented efficiently. As part of a process review conducted by Allocate, the RFA has identified additional requirements to improve the optimisation of its workforce. Through reduced manual paperwork, and with the automation of key RFA processes, the RFA human resources personnel will be able to spend more time on the career management of seafarers. More than just a workforce planning solution, Allocate's product suite continues to expand with new features and capabilities built on modern technologies that can equip organisations such as the RFA with the tools to help them become agile and better equipped to adapt to a changing world.

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“Allocate Solutions has become a business-critical tool for the RFA. Having a single view of crew resource allows us to track existing or future crew management issues. Being able to fill ship billets with the right person at the right time means we can provide real-time, accurate onboard information. The statistics and auditability mean we can always know the state of the personnel department.”

Captain Peter Selby,
Head of RFA Personnel Operations,

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“Allocate provides a complete Managed Service package that includes on-site support backed up by a dedicated Advanced Support Team. This has enabled our users to work alongside a regular support staff and share knowledge effectively. Allocate and RFA continue to collaborate on improving the efficiency of operations.”

Chief Officer Ali Clack,
RFA Personnel Capability Manager

