

Ashbury Training

A bespoke training solution case study

Marks & Spencer



Executive Summary

Ashbury Training was awarded a contract to implement a learning solution for the Marks and Spencer FIND project in July 2003. Over the last 2 years Ashbury have delivered over 400 successful training days both to internal M&S Food Division staff and to M&S food suppliers.

The training project required an imaginative approach to the course content and training methodology due to the complexity of the system and the diverse requirements of users. The project also presented a huge logistic challenge in terms of the globally dispersed nature of the supplier companies.

The training solution involved modular, instructor-led training courses, e-learning, self-led learning, support materials and comprehensive review and evaluation procedures.

The training roll-out comprised of 3 separate phases:

Phase 1	Suppliers	August to September 2003
Phase 2	M&S and Suppliers	January to June 2004
Phase 3	Support and Upgrade training	June 2004 – September 2005

Table of Contents

Overview..... 4

FIND Software Summary 4

Ashbury Training..... 5

Phase 1:..... 6

 Objectives 6

 Instructor-led Training Course Solution:..... 7

 E-learning..... 7

 Phase 1 Review 7

 Timescale..... 8

Phase 2..... 9

 Objectives 9

 Constraints 9

 Instructor-led Internal Training Course Solution: 11

 Instructor-led Supplier Training Course Solution:..... 14

 Timescale..... 15

Post Project Review..... 16

Budgetary considerations 16

Impact & Contribution 16

Achievements 16

Additional Comments..... 16

Overview

M&S are using the GNX FIND (**F**ood **I**Nnovation **D**atabase) platform to manage its New Product Development activities. M&S is the only major food retailer to sell 100% own brand products, this project is therefore of significant strategic importance to M&S as it is the first time they have used a software solution that both manages the full product development life-cycle and also forms a centralised database of product information.

The adoption of FIND across the Food Division formed a central pillar of the M&S drive for consistent and effective business processes as part of the "Simply more Efficient" corporate directive.

Marks & Spencer went live with the FIND solution in January 2004 and Ashbury Training has helped in the transition of the current product lifecycle activities to FIND. The process will be completed in December 2005 and Ashbury continue to offer support on all new product developments to the system.

FIND Software Summary

FIND is a web-based, product lifecycle management system, designed on Microsoft Windows DNA application architecture. FIND is delivered as a hosted solution and accessible with a browser interface.

The FIND system combines New Product Development (NPD) and Specifications Management functionality.

1. New Product Development (NPD)

FIND manages NPD by defining the activities that are required from all team members from the first product idea to launch date.

To achieve this, FIND adopts a 7 stage 'Stage Gate' system managed by a workflow. The tasks in the workflow specify who should do what and when, and what groups of activities (stages) need to be approved (at gates) to move the project forward effectively. Each Stage is a sequence of tasks that must be completed by M&S and suppliers.

z2. Specifications Management

FIND also forms a database of all product information, allowing searchability of all ingredients and their countries of origin.

The supplier is responsible for completing and submitting product specifications for online approval by the M&S technologist. M&S are responsible for ensuring that all food products currently on sale have an approved specification on FIND.

This information can be used by M&S Customer Services staff when receiving calls from customers with ingredient queries.

Ashbury Training

Ashbury Training was started as a new venture in July 2002 by Justin Davies and James Post.

With 10 years of training experience, Justin and James have shaped a company that incorporates high quality teaching, successful blended learning solutions and expert customer care practices.

Winning the M&S contract to teach FIND James and Justin out-proposed their well established competitors in the industry by offering a detailed proposal focusing on relationship building between our two companies, clear objectives and our individual 'learning-focused' attitude. Our relationship with M&S endures to the present day.

Training Management

The Project was managed for Ashbury Training by James Post. James was based at M&S headquarters in London's Baker Street with the M&S FIND team and was setup within M&S with an internal phone extension and e-mail account. This allowed James to develop the Phase 1 & 2 courses, training materials and e-learning disks, while overseeing the trainers and supplying training logistic solutions.

This solution allowed James to react immediately with the M&S FIND team to all situations and to have regular process meetings regarding all aspects of the project. The M&S FIND team attended all pilot courses and signed off all handouts and training data.

A consultative exercise was undertaken to bring James up to speed with all job-roles and current working practices within M&S and their Food suppliers. To keep costs for the client low James doubled as training project manager and senior trainer. James also ran train the trainer sessions with the other Ashbury Training trainers for phase 1 and 2 of the project.

Ashbury Training also developed a course assessment form database accessible by any members of the M&S FIND team to track delegate responses to all training. It was used in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the training project to generate reports on training success and trainer performance.

Ashbury also provided a post training e-mail help address to support suppliers for one-month post training. This support was only available to the people who attended the Raw Materials Database Training courses to help assure attendance.

Phase 1:

Objectives

- *Objective 1:* All suppliers had to be registered onto the live FIND system.
- *Objective 2:* All suppliers had to be able to accurately enter all their raw material information into the FIND database.
- *Objective 3:* All suppliers had to be able to navigate all product specification fields on the FIND system.

Our solution to the Phase 1 objectives was to invite suppliers to attend hands-on training at Marks & Spencer's premises at Baker Street in London.

Instructor-led Training Course Solution:

09:30-10:30	Objective 1:
	This objective was satisfied by including live registration onto the FIND system as part of the course.
10:45 – 3:00	Objective 2:
	The second session of the training course allowed suppliers to learn and practice the input of raw material data onto a training site. Once confident they were then instructed to input all of their raw materials onto the live system with the trainer available to answer any queries and ensure accuracy.
3:15 -5:00	Objective 3:
	The final session of the training course allowed suppliers to learn and practice the navigation of all product specification fields on FIND. They could practice the input of data onto the specification system on the training site, and complete the input into the live system once back at their company premises with the aid of the training notes.

E-learning

The e-learning solution created and developed by Ashbury Training was required for the non UK-based suppliers and others who were unable to attend the instructor-led training.

The e-learning included screen shots with annotations and incorporated real-time video clips so that users seeing FIND for the first time could watch the steps required to complete the Raw Material Database before building their own database.

Phase 1 Review

A review meeting after Phase 1 used the Course Assessment Form database and supplier comments to show the success of Phase1. Phase 2 was then authorised for launch and Ashbury Training chosen again as the vendor to devise and implement the training solution.

Phase 2

Objectives

- *Objective 1:* M&S Product Developers to demonstrate the ability to setup new products on the FIND system.
- *Objective 2:* M&S Technologists to be able to approve and manage specifications.
- *Objective 3:* M&S Buyers to be able to complete commercial pages on FIND.
- *Objective 4:* M&S Merchandisers to be able to complete stores and success criteria and sales estimates on FIND.
- *Objective 5:* M&S Product And Packaging Co-ordinators to be able to use FIND to approve artwork and brief the artwork house.
- *Objective 6:* All suppliers to be able to complete their tasks in FIND and follow the NPD process to launch their product through FIND
- *Objective 7:* All suppliers to be able to complete product specifications and request approval from M&S technologist
- *Objective 8:* All suppliers to be able to complete their pack copy and request approval from M&S PRODUCT AND PACKAGING CO-ORDINATORS.
- *Objective 9:* All suppliers to be able to setup new users and adjust user access levels

Constraints

M&S set the following project constraints:

1. As multiple suppliers would be attending training together, supplier products and ingredients had to remain confidential during training.
2. The training delivery to be completed by June 04 due to M&S moving to their new offices at Waterside from Baker St.
3. The FIND system had to be rolled-out to and trained to each of the following business categories:

Bakery	Biscuits	Café Revive
Celebration	Coated Poultry / Fish & Frozen	Confectionery
Dairy & Juice	Delicatessen	Desserts
Flowers & Plants	Food To Go	Fruit
Global Meal Solutions	Groceries	Household & Beauty
Marketing	Poultry & Meat	Salad & Vegetables
Savouries	Traditional Meal Solution	Wine Beers & Spirits

Each category above has a team of 8-28 people covering the roles of:

Product Developer	Technologist
Buyer	Product and Packaging Co-ordinator
Industry Merchandiser	Customer Merchandiser

Category Merchandiser	Category Manager
-----------------------	------------------

In order to satisfy the challenges presented by the objectives for Phase 2, training courses were delivered to the top 100 suppliers of M&S at a training centre in Nottingham (this location was chosen as a geographically central point to cut down travel time for all suppliers).

Each week a different M&S category was trained at Baker Street, while that category's suppliers were trained in Nottingham.

Instructor-led Internal Training Course Solution:

The M&S training course used a modular solution. This allowed differing job roles within each category to only attend relevant workshops during the 3 day course.

An additional 'two rooms' training solution devised to aid this modular setup allowed maximum utilisation of our trainers and helped keep the cost of phase 2 down for our customer.

The 3 day course involved one trainer teaching all 3 days. Another trainer floorwalked the last category trained the previous week on day 1, taught in room 2 on day 2 and floorwalked the new category just trained on day 4.

Day 1

9.30 – 12:30	
Presentation & Agenda for 3 days and System Overview	All users attended this module to cover an overview of the system. Additionally, all users were able to experiment with FIND, navigate through the pages they would need to use and become comfortable with the 'look and feel' of the system.

1.30 – 4:30	Objective 1 solution- Part 1
Product Developers	Product Developers who are responsible for setting up new products on the system were instructed how to invite team members and a supplier to the product and attach a workflow on the system.

Day 2 – Room 1

9.30 – 12:30	Objective 2 solution
Technologists	Technologists were instructed how to use FIND to manage the legal and technical approval of the product specifications.

1.30 – 2.45	Objective 3 solution
Buyers	Buyers were instructed how to Complete commercial pages on FIND.

3.00 – 4.30	Objective 4 solution
Merchandisers	Merchandisers were instructed how to Complete stores and success criteria and sales estimates on FIND.

Day 2 – Self-led Modules Room 2

During these self-led sessions there was always an instructor on hand to answer questions.

9.30 – 12:30	Objective 1 solution- Part 2
Product Developers	Product Developer were able to practice setting up dummy products on the training version of FIND using their own notes from the previous day and using a step by step guide.

1.30 – 4.30	Objective 1 solution- Part 3
Product Developers and Technologists	Under supervision Product Developers setup their first products on the live FIND system. Technologists were able to practice the technical applications of specification on the FIND training site using their own notes from their previous training module.

Day 3

9.30 – 12.30	Objective 5 solution
Product and Packaging Co-ordinators	Product and Packaging Co-ordinators were instructed how to complete and approve pack copy on FIND.

1.30 – 4.30	Objective 1 solution- Part 4
Training Review and Evaluation	<p>Product developers were able to demonstrate the ability to setup new products on the live FIND system. This enabled other job roles to see what tasks they were involved in from that day forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIND Quiz – to test their understanding of the main concepts • Review the course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Traditional Course Assessment Form ○ An instructor-led discussion to define: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § The good points of the course content and methodology § What could be changed to improve the course <p>All comments were recorded and M&S and Ashbury held weekly meetings to review course content, structure and teaching methodology.</p>

Support Materials

Quick Reference Cards

Each delegate received a foldable card to keep at their desk with tips, shortcuts and helpline contact numbers.

Mouse Mat

Customised mouse mats were created for the Phase 2 training. The mouse mats had an acetate 'pocket' which held the training course hand-out for attending delegates to easily refer to during and post training.

Course Folder

The manual for internal M&S users was an A4 folder of handouts, each handout was either generic information on the system or role specific. Because each manual was a folder it was possible to hand pick the contents of each folder to fit the job-role of each delegate.

Instructor-led Supplier Training Course Solution:**1 Day Course**

9.30 – 10.45	Objective 6 solution
	Suppliers were instructed how to complete their tasks in FIND and follow the NPD process to launch their product through FIND.
11.00 – 12.30	Objective 7 solution
	Suppliers were instructed how to complete product specifications and request approval from M&S Technologist. Dummy products were set up for suppliers to practice their new skills.
1.30 – 2.45	Objective 8 solution
	Suppliers were instructed how to complete their pack copy and request approval from M&S Product and Packaging Co-ordinators.
3.00 – 4.30	Objective 9 solution
	All suppliers to be able to setup new users and adjust user access levels.

Manuals

Ashbury Training produced a training manual for all suppliers.

E-Learning

A new e-learning disk was also created and sent to every supplier. The e-learning solution was designed for users who could not attend the instructor-led training and covered all the objectives detailed above. Due to the success of the e-learning many of the suppliers who had attended the training also used the disk to instruct new members of staff.

Post Project Review

The Course Assessment Form Database created by Ashbury Training offered valuable information during and post training. How each trainer performed and the effectiveness of each course by job-role could be ascertained pointing towards the enormous success of the training project.

Budgetary considerations

We are proud to announce that at the end of Phase 2, the solutions of Ashbury Training brought the training project to a close under budget and on time.

Impact & Contribution

The effectiveness of FIND recently became clear during the Sudan 1 crisis.

It allowed M&S to locate all affected products within 30 minutes.

David Gregory, the head of food technology at Marks & Spencer “Marks & Spencer can trace all ingredients back to source within 30 minutes with more than 95 per cent accuracy.”

(Sunday Telegraph, London, 26/02/2005)

Achievements

The success of both Phases of the FIND roll-out has led to an enduring relationship between M&S and Ashbury Training of which we are most proud.

We continue to help them today on a number of new projects including FIND which has undergone a number of version changes and re-designs.

Additional Comments

We are particularly proud that this successful training project was achieved by a 2 man band that had newly formed Ashbury Training. The success of this project has helped move us into a steadily increasing client base and market share. The importance of understanding clients' job roles and attitudes and not teaching IT in a dry, disjointed structure, formed the cornerstone of the success of the FIND training project and is the professional ethos that Ashbury Training insist on.

Ashbury Training has demonstrated how a professional, personal approach to training and project management and then applying innovative training solutions can address logistically complex training requirements over geographically dispersed locations on a complex product.

Susie Giles, the head of project FIND at Marks & Spencer “Ashbury Training delivered a truly innovative training solution for Project FIND. They quickly learnt the detailed business processes within the Food Division and applied this knowledge to their training solution. A great success!”