Kestrel Fact Sheet 6
Frequently asked questions

Purpose of the Fact Sheet

There are some questions we are asked frequently - so they must be important to our clients. Therefore we decided to document our model answers. We are always happy to visit existing and potential clients to explore these or other questions you might have.

Do you have any examples of where Kestrel is in use elsewhere?

See Kestrel Fact Sheet 4.

What problems or issues have your other clients encountered when implementing Kestrel?

These can be many and varied but there are some common themes. See Kestrel Fact Sheet 7.

Wouldn't we be better off using a larger supplier?

The reasons for asking this question are normally driven by two concerns - the risk of a small business going bust and the frequently held opinion that large suppliers know more. We'll take each of these in turn.

The UIC has been in business in the UK since 1992 and Australia since 1999. We have survived major clients going bankrupt and defaulting on their debts, wild swings in currencies, the Global Financial Crisis, changes of government policy, colleagues leaving and a whole lot more. That's because, as an organisational improvement consultancy, we practice what we preach. We strategise, plan and have contingencies in place. If the worst ever did happen, we always place your software in Escrow and have processes in place for regular back-up of your data.

As a small business, we don't have the problems of a large silo-ed supplier. We don't split our activities between sales, development and support. Our clients know the people who develop their systems, support them and give advice. Additionally our Systems Consultants, as well as being experienced in all stages of software design, development, testing and support, are also specialists in operational performance improvement - so we have a deep understanding of, not only the software, but operations and how to improve reliability and punctuality.

We also pride ourselves on our long-term relationships with our clients (both individuals and organisations), some of which go back many years. Because we are small we have time to get to know you and for you to get to know us.

www.theuic.com

Wouldn't we be better off developing something in-house?

It is not unusual to hear this said by a prospective client. Philosophically the UIC leans towards insourcing rather than outsourcing - our approach to training internal Facilitators rather than generating more work for ourselves is an example of this.

Our experience however tells us that:

- Most IT departments have great technical skills but little or no knowledge of operations, performance regimes or improvement - and also an IT career path tends to be in IT in different industries rather than just transport. This means that the Performance Team has to spend a lot of time explaining their requirements. This takes time and is an iterative process - requiring even more time. We know what we are doing in all of these areas and will just get on with it. Version 1 of Kestrel comes complete with numerous tried-and-tested Reports, Analytical Tools and Enquiries so, even if you don't know what you want, you will have something to use while you get going.

- Until fairly recently organisations that built their own solutions mainly used Excel and Access. We know because one client turned off more than 500 separate databases when they switched on Kestrel. Currently the trend is to use generic Business Intelligence software. The two disadvantages of this are:

    (1) Many of the people you want to be using the system, in particular Front-line Managers, don't have the necessary data skills to tease information out of the data. Kestrel is easy and intuitive to use.

    (2) The knowledge of how the solution is set up tends to rest in the brain of the one person that wrote it. We have seen entire cottage industries of spreadsheets and reports fall over following the departure, promotion or sickness of one or two key individuals.

Do you add new functionality to Kestrel yourselves?

Yes, if we come up with a new idea for one client and it works, we will (providing we aren't sharing any confidential information or intellectual property) add it to your version of Kestrel as well.

How can you achieve your promised delivery schedules - they seem very tight?

Put simply, we know what we are doing because we've done this many times before. Our timescales include testing and installation to a test environment (but not User Acceptance Testing as that is outside of our direct control). We also make the client aware of common issues that might cause a delay so that they can take steps to mitigate against them.

What is your support offer?

See Kestrel Fact Sheet 3.

Can you provide Software as a Service?

Yes, we can and have good experience of this. In Australia we use Rackspace who have a data centre in Sydney. In the UK we use both UK Servers and Extraordinary Managed Services. All our hosting suppliers are ISO27001 compliant.

Alternatively we can install Kestrel on your infrastructure if you prefer.

Do you really not charge for variations? Are there any exceptions?

No we don't. This is because in previous existences UIC colleagues have sat on the other side of the table and been stung by their suppliers. And we didn't like it. We believe that our clients should have certainty of costs and, as a supplier, we should know what we're doing.

But there are exceptions. If a client specifically requests some new functionality that is outside the scope of Kestrel or the support services we provide, we will provide a quote for the enhancement. This can be by one-off fee or increase to the Monthly Licence Fee going forward - it's the clients choice as to which they prefer, we can quote for either or both.

A good example of this is Kestrel for Northern. We developed a Fuel Efficiency Module which was new functionality well outside of existing scope and the client opted to pay a one-off fee.

What are your typical SLAs?

We have a standard Kestrel Licence Agreement which contains all the SLAs you would expect for a system like Kestrel. We are happy to review your SLA requirements should you have organisational standards. We are happy to report against SLAs monthly if you require this.

What platform and software does Kestrel use and how do you keep up-to-date?

See Kestrel Fact Sheet 5.

Do we have access to the data in Kestrel?

The data is yours. While we do not endorse Kestrel being used as a Data Warehouse, we are able to provide extracts or exports of all or any data at a frequency and date range to be determined by you, to the Data Warehouse or location of your choice.

How do you mitigate typical IT risks?

We have addressed some specific risks in Kestrel Fact Sheet 7.

Can Kestrel be accessed by mobile phone or tablet?

Yes, as long as your own IT protocols allow it. Kestrel can be optimised to run on any device, as it is now developed in ASP.Net Core which is device agnostic. We make sure Kestrel is mobile-ready during development.