



## **Futuristic transport company Ultra Global gives Proquis QMS a ticket to ride**

Ultra Global (formerly Advanced Transport Systems Ltd) designs and implements tomorrow's personal rapid transport systems today. This forward thinking innovator of sustainable driver-less transport has grown from a Research & Development company into a fully-fledged organisation that delivers major personal rapid transport (PRT) projects to large sites such as airports, large corporate estates and city centres. With its successful growth comes a greater need for tighter process control. Ultra Global found its solution in a tailored Quality Management System (QMS) from Proquis.

Ultra Global began developing its ULTra personal rapid transit system in 1995 under the leadership of its founder Martin Lowson, in association with the University of Bristol. The company's cutting edge PRT system evolved as the ideal solution for providing sustainable, environmentally-friendly transport.

The company completed the initial phases of prototype development and has undertaken successful passenger trials in 2008. To undertake the trials consent was given by HM Rail Inspectorate for carrying the public, which, for such futuristic transport, was a major milestone. Total investment on the project was more than £20 million.

In 2003, Ultra Global performed a series of passenger trials at the Company's trials site, a track that reproduces all the features of a typical city application. The passengers undertook a representative journey, including use of the destination request panel, entering the vehicle, commencing (launching) the journey, completing a 1km (approximately) journey that included inclines, declines, elevated track (5.7m) and various tight and sweeping corners. An independent survey concluded that all the passengers (100 per cent of those participating) found the experience either satisfactory or very satisfactory. These trials drew a lot of attention from major organisations.

In 2011 Ultra's first commercially operational pod system provides 800 passengers per day with a vital link between the T5 Business Car Park and the terminal itself. This powerful example of the system's benefits, the small footprint of the Heathrow pods system enables it to fit within the tight constraints imposed by the airport infrastructure.

Commissioned by Heathrow Airport operator BAA, the system consists of 21 vehicles, a total of 3.8 kilometres of one-way guideway, and three stations – two in the T5 Business Car Park and one at Terminal 5. The pods are powered by electricity, generate zero local emissions and are typically 70 per cent more energy efficient than buses.

### **Meet the man behind Ultra Global ' process management**

Mark Douglas joined Ultra Global in January 2008 as Engineering Process Manager and his role is already expanding as the company undergoes rapid evolution as interest increases in its PRT solutions.

*“We are experiencing accelerated growth due to the great interest in our systems. What started out 10 years ago as an academic-based Research & Development company is now a commercial entity. My role in all this is to introduce and drive process management throughout engineering,”* comments Mark Douglas.

When he joined the company the only evidence of a QMS was a defunct Quality Management manual, which was adequate enough to support the organisation's R&D past but could not take the company forward with its demanding customers. Mark Douglas set about reviewing the market and soon narrowed his focus to Proquis Enterprise. He was familiar with the QMS specialist Allclear process mapping product as he had used this with his previous employer.

### **Elegant QMS utilises minimalistic configuration**

Mark Douglas identified four key modules that would underpin his requirement for revolutionising Ultra Global' QM and process control. These were Document Control, Personnel Management and Supplier Control, with Allclear as a fully integrated process mapping tool.

*“Document Control is the basis for controlling all documentation in the engineering and projects departments. This provides a comprehensive repository and enables us to apply Configuration Control to files. This ensures that when a member of the team needs to access a file, they get the up-to-date version. It also ensures that files cannot be altered without first raising a Change Note for the document owner to approve before the change is made,”* says Mark Douglas.

The Personnel Management module provides details of employees including name, location, department, and reporting structure and much more than just payroll information. With it the management team can maintain details

of duties, skills, certification, internal and external training and other personnel-related issues, such as absence, disciplinary and grievances and holidays. At this stage of the implementation, Ultra Global uses this module as a secure team-member list so that each employee can gain access to the QMS and to assign access privileges to the various documents.

*“On the surface we are just making use of Personnel Management at a basic level. Nevertheless, this module provides a highly secure method of entry to the system. No-one can gain access without being included on the list,”* says Mark Douglas.

The Supplier Control implementation is also at an early stage. With it Ultra Global is set up to maintain the full gamut of supplier information such as names and addresses, contacts, correspondence, audits/evaluations and supplier issues monitoring.

*“We currently use Supplier Control very much like we use the Personnel Management module. The difference being that the list comprises all our vendors and with it we can grant them access to the system if required and we can include certain suppliers on document circulation,”* comments Mark Douglas.

As mentioned earlier Mark Douglas is familiar user of Allclear and values its rapid and seamless ability to produce process flow diagrams and link these to relevant documents.

*“Allclear is a powerful process flow mapping tool. There are alternatives but nothing matches its utility and ability to link with the QMS as a fully integrated application,”* he says.

Mark Douglas soon recognised that there is much more to gain from the system but has identified some extremely important benefits.

*“Proquis has brought all of our documentation under tighter control. We now have instant enterprise-wide visibility of our documents, which has streamlined our operation immensely. We no longer need to search for files and so we can make much better use of our time. The ability to control who can access documents and what level of privileges they have with regard to updating and altering files offers additional security.*

*“In addition, our customers are very happy that we are making great strides forward in process control. It gives them faith in us now that they can see clearly that we are improving our process management procedures. With Proquis our customers can easily audit our processes now that we have all documentation in one place,”* he concludes.      --- Ends ---