

# Gallowglass

Since its inception in 1996, Gallowglass has expanded to become the premier crewing operator for the United Kingdom (UK) events industry. The name Gallowglass was given to Scottish mercenaries in the troubled 13th century. They were elite warriors who had a reputation for getting the job done. During the years since inception, the Gallowglass service has grown and grown. In September 1996 Gallowglass had five clients employed; 12 years on, they have over 2000 clients on the books and work regularly for over 1500 clients, a number that increases every week.

## Business Challenge

Rapid growth has meant Gallowglass' manual resource and financial planning systems needed serious improvement, so that employees can efficiently plan and prepare for an increasing number of events. Following the success of a previous version of Microsoft® Dynamics NAV™ business management software, Gallowglass recently upgraded to Microsoft Dynamics NAV 5.0. Using this technology, Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner TVision Technology built a resource planning solution – Automatic Crew Assignment – to enhance the system, which had already been recognised with a prestigious award from Real Business magazine. The solution has doubled the company's turnover, while administrative staff numbers have remained the same. Planning jobs that once took half an hour are handled in just minutes, and Gallowglass expects the solution to significantly increase its profit margin.

## The Solution

As the United Kingdom's largest and most experienced crewing operation, Gallowglass knows only too well the detailed logistical planning that is necessary for the hire and distribution of crew and

staging materials. The organisation's rapid growth since its inception in 1996 prompted the company to find ways to better support the planning process – from setup to the dismantling of events such as exhibitions, corporate events, and theatrical shows.

Until 2003, a basic database and financials software from Sage helped the business to handle planning and accounts, but as Gallowglass began to take on an increasing number of large scale projects and hire more crew, these solutions were no longer sufficient.

Nick Grecian, Managing Director at Gallowglass, explains that using the aging system, some staff often needed to work until 11pm planning for events. He says: "We wanted a system that was seamless, from taking orders to invoicing clients, and also a solution that made it easier to handle the crew for each new job."

In 2003, Gallowglass spoke to a number of software suppliers before choosing to deploy Microsoft Dynamics NAV 3.6 business management software. This offered them the flexibility they needed to manage the unique aspects of the business, from resource planning to accounting. The company engaged with Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner TVision Technology to implement the solution.



Both Gallowglass and Microsoft Dynamics NAV have evolved since this deployment. Gallowglass has expanded to around 500 crew members, supplying more than 9500 events in the last 12 months alone. This makes it the U.K. event industry's largest crewing operator. The organisation was keen to save costs by managing this rapid growth and larger projects without the need for hiring numerous new staff members. Darren Thorley, IT Department, Gallowglass, explains: "By better planning resources according to well thought out parameters, we knew we'd be able to take on more large jobs without having to employ additional administrators."

"We needed the support of cutting-edge technology that offered even greater flexibility for reporting, and adapted to the rapid expansion of the company."

In 2007, Gallowglass upgraded to Microsoft Dynamics NAV version 5.0, which offers extensive functionality, such as job and item tracking, to accommodate the company's more recent demands. Alexander Pappas, Head of Operations, TVision Technology, says: "This later release offers a more granular level of management to easily handle jobs and resources."

TVision Technology developed a custom piece of software on Microsoft Dynamics NAV called Automatic Crew Assignment, which automates as much as 70 per cent of the resource planning work for Gallowglass. The company uses it to map crew to jobs and bookings. Thorley says: "A customer may request crew and staging for a six-day road show. They need to be available on particular dates, and have special requirements, such as a forklift driver or someone trained in first aid." A user can set these parameters in the system, which will then pick the right crew for that job based on their experience, availability, skills, and hours worked. The partner has also incorporated important health and safety regulations in the Microsoft Dynamics NAV solution, ensuring crew members receive their mandatory breaks and leave.

Gallowglass uses Microsoft Dynamics NAV 5.0 to automate accounts and invoicing. It runs checks on clients to alert the company of insufficient credit or a poor payment history, and prevents the booking of crew to a job until a purchase order is raised.

TVision Technology also developed a system that displays confirmed bookings on an interactive whiteboard, with details such as venue, number of crew, number of hours, and any special requirements. Managers can see at a glance all the information they need to ensure events are properly staffed and promptly fulfil customer needs.

Gallowglass is taking advantage of more seamless integration of Microsoft Dynamics NAV 5.0 with Microsoft SQL Server® 2005 to generate detailed reports. For example, the technology analyses job-history information and combines it with client feedback to generate comprehensive reports.

Senior staff can analyse important information such as individual performance, crew and resource efficiency, and financial status. Thorley says: "In the past, these reports were less detailed. But SQL Server Reporting Services and Windows® SharePoint® Services are amazing tools that give us greater scope to write more interactive reports using familiar development language. I recently used it to build a report in about half a day, where previously I would have been still struggling after a week—and it wouldn't have looked half as good. I can also give managers the information they need much faster."

Using financial tools within the technology, such as invoicing, purchase ledger, and sales, Gallowglass has consolidated its international operations far more effectively. "We can merge all the financial information from our U.K., France, and Spain operations to give us a better global overview of budgets and turnover," says Thorley. Localisation features in Microsoft Dynamics NAV ensure that the European operations can view and calculate financial information in their own currency. Thorley says: "We also aim to use local language features in the technology for reporting in future. When we're ready, it's very easy to set up."



## The Benefits

Gallowglass has been recognised for its use of innovative technology by winning the back-office automation category of Real Business magazine's "Britain's Digital Elite awards" – generating press coverage, articles, and videos for the organisation. Microsoft Dynamics NAV 5.0 will scale to accommodate dramatic business growth without the need for large-scale recruitment of administrative staff. It helps the business plan resources for events quickly, improves the work/life balance for employees, and provides Gallowglass clients with a reliable, seamless operation.

### Enhanced Business Efficiency Helps Double Turnover without Increasing Staff

Prior to its upgrade to Microsoft Dynamics NAV 5.0, Gallowglass felt that its rate of growth would almost demand more administrative employees. But, as Thorley explains, the solution has saved the organisation significant recruitment costs: "The Automatic Crew Assignment solution, running on Microsoft Dynamics NAV 5.0, has the potential to accommodate a greater number of larger jobs with the same number of planning staff."

Despite the fact that its IT systems now process vast data volumes, offer greater functionality, and support a rapidly growing number of users and events, Gallowglass has also kept its IT department the same size. In fact, Thorley remains the sole IT member. "We now have up to 500 members of crew in the system, which will continue to grow with the business as it has been designed with virtually unlimited crew in mind," he says.

Grecian says: "There is no doubt that Microsoft Dynamics NAV has contributed significantly to our growth by radically increasing efficiency and reducing the administration overhead. In 2003, we had 250 crew members on our books and today we offer twice that number to clients. Our turnover has more than doubled in this time to more than U.S.\$13.75 million, yet the finance and administration teams have remained the same."

### Automation Balances Faster Job Planning with Critical Health and Safety Needs

Cumbersome and time-consuming manual processes are a thing of the past. Not only do clients receive the right crew with the right skills, but the solution automatically protects crew members, helping to ensure they don't work excessive hours. Gallowglass takes health and safety very seriously. It has built in functionality that prevents tiredness-related onsite accidents by enforcing significant breaks between shifts. "We're not a nine-to-five business, so it can be complex to ensure people get the right break. Now, we not only comply with, but exceed government regulations about working hours, without affecting our service," says Thorley.

Despite the additional information processed by the technology, Gallowglass can plan resources significantly faster. Thorley says: "In the past, planning crew for a small, 10-person job could take at least half an hour. Today, the system can complete the task in less than two minutes – a significant time saving."

### Better Client Service Boosts Profit Margins

Grecian explains that because the Gallowglass system is so efficient, clients know they'll receive the best possible service, from order through to invoicing. "This year, we worked on 9,500 events, which equates to 90,000 shifts. On those, we'll achieve a profit increase which leaves us at the top end of the market," he says. "People spend more for the peace of mind of having us there, and that also maintains our margin."

Gallowglass generates invoices quickly and accurately, and clients are billed without error or delay. The seamless process helps more clients to pay within their allocated time, and maintains a constant cash flow for the business. "Our debtor days are reduced to just 30 from an average of 40 days, which was calculated earlier in 2008, which is a remarkable achievement," says Grecian.



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**Nick Grecian, Managing Director, Gallowglass**

### Flexible Solution Easily Accommodates Highly Specific Needs

Pappas explains that Microsoft Dynamics NAV 5.0 is an ideal environment in which to develop such industry-specific technology. He says: “Microsoft Dynamics NAV 5.0 offers a broad set of functionality, allowing us to incorporate almost any customisation. It solves problems for customers like Gallowglass and, unlike its competitors, there’s very little we can’t do.”

Gallowglass is taking advantage of one module in particular to solve a unique challenge. TVision Technology has customised the customer relationship management (CRM) module within Microsoft Dynamics NAV 5.0 to handle the complicated logistical issues that occur when the business works with large venues. Gallowglass has to work with a network of contacts, including the venue manager, technical director, stage hands, security, public relations people, and project managers. “A list of contacts simply isn’t good enough,” says Thorley. “We need an up-to-date account of who is responsible for what, first and second points of contact, and people who have left or joined.”

The latest release solution offers more detailed CRM information to cope with these additional demands. Thorley says: “We use the CRM module to look at what our clients are doing with us and how we can provide a better service to them. It is great piece of software, especially compared with other CRM systems, and one of the driving factors for the upgrade. At the click of a mouse, we can see all contacts, track the individual who placed the order – not just the company, and make sure we’re talking to the right person at the right time.

Thanks to the team at TVision Technology we’ve gained maximum value from our investment into Microsoft Dynamics NAV 5.0 and we will continue to partner with them.”

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**Nick Grecian, Managing Director, Gallowglass**

**For more detailed information on how the Gallowglass project was managed and delivered, or for more information on how TVision can support your own project, please feel free to contact Sales on 01932 242001**

#### **TVision Technology Ltd**

Case House  
85/89 High Street  
Walton on Thames  
Surrey  
KT12 1DZ

T. **+44 (0)1932 242001**  
E. **info@tvisiontech.co.uk**  
W. **www.tvisiontech.co.uk**

