

## rpmI – The Journey to Achieving Information Assurance

### About rpmI

rpmI is a versatile, well established national financial services company. Their core business is administering pension schemes'. Originally this was a service available only to railway employees. However, their organisation is now more commercially focused and is continually striving to expand its client base.

One of rpmI's main objectives is to provide a high quality customer service and professional advice to its clients and a long term commitment to its partners. This is demonstrated through the numerous industry awards the organisation has won recently, including: Best Use of IT, Best In-House Administration and Large Scheme of the Year.

rpmI's continuous commitment and dedication to their clients and business partners is evident in their growth. rpmI looks after the interest of over 500,000 people in the UK and is extremely versatile, managing schemes with as few as 9 contributors and as many as 36,000. Their offices are based in Darlington and London and employ a total of 190 staff.

### Being the best

There is no disputing the fact that rpmI are continuously improving on existing working practices, to ensure they remain a cut above their competitors. The organisation considers itself to be the best and because of this rpmI is always looking for new ways to demonstrate efficiency.

Ken Walls is employed as Production Manager for rpmI. He has been with the company for 24 years and assisted with the first installation of the computer systems infrastructure within the organisation. Today, Ken is responsible for the day to day provision of computer services to rpmI and the management of all 3rd party hosting services.

As rpmI is developing, along with its infrastructure and the amount of corporate data passing through its systems; both electronically and physically Ken and the Network Control team began to investigate the possibilities of achieving a security standard, that would reflect the organisations astute approach to Information Assurance. They chose the globally recognised ISO 27001 as the method to achieve their goal.

### Finding the right partner

"Looking for the right consultancy firm to guide us through the process is crucial to the success of the project" comments Ken. "We were seeking a company that had experience in both achieving ISO 27001 certification and also in guiding other organisations through the process - successfully."

rpmI approached a number of organisations to submit a scoping document for review. Ken reviewed each organisation and assessed them on their merit. After a thorough elimination process he decided to award the contract to Sapphire.

***"I chose Sapphire largely due to reputation, knowledge and locality. Through my industry peers I had learned of Sapphire's services and existing certification to ISO 27001. Sapphire had a good working knowledge of our industry and they were independent; meaning that they had no previous connections with rpmI and were joining the project with no preconceptions of the way we work. Locality was also a bonus, there are few security consultancy firms in the north east with Sapphire's experience"***

Ken Walls, Production Manager, rpmI

Sapphire provided the support to rpmI in the form of a Strategic Support Agreement (SSA), this allowed both organisations a certain amount of flexibility when arranging dates and times for the consultants to be on site and provided a flexible payment plan that suited rpmI's budget requirements.

rpmI has completed Phase One of the ISO 27001 project, this comprised a Gap Analysis and Risk Assessment. The organisation is now implementing a Security Improvement Plan, in an Operational Improvement phase.



## Case Study

### Gap Analysis

The GA took around 3 days to complete. It showed rpmi where their existing security methods and procedures measured up against ISO 27001 Industry Best Practice. The next step was for both organisations to sit down and formulate a Security Improvement Plan. This gave rpmi a clear idea of the action required, to enable them to achieve compliance and eventually certification.

“The Gap Analysis was very thought provoking. It did highlight a number of weak areas, but this came as no surprise.” comments Ken. “We were aware that a number of our existing procedures required updating and the whole system needed a review.”

Once the Gap Analysis was complete, Ken implemented a relevant project structure including a steering group including Director and Executive employees along with himself as project manager. Ken believes the Gap Analysis helped all involved see the security issues behind the project, rather than just the business drivers.

### The Result

Now that they are at the beginning of the operational improvement phase, Ken is beginning to roll out the rest of the scheme. The network control team is getting involved from a systems security perspective. The board are also taking a positive approach by offering relevant project support.

“Taking the SSA approach with Sapphire has proved to be beneficial. We have been able to bounce ideas off each other and spent many hours debating the best way to move the project forward. Between the whole team we have plenty of constructive discussions and a good mix of personalities to get the balance right. At the same time we continue to interpret the standard and how it applies to rpmi as an organisation in its own right.”

rpmi has experienced few problems in implementing the project so far, but Ken feels this may change in the up and coming months.

“It’s still early days, we have been looking at implementing ISO 27001 from the viewpoint of a manager, taking all the business drivers and security issues into account. It’s now a case of putting this theory into practice; this will mean getting the rest of our staff involved and changing our existing work procedures.”

Getting the working community on board with such a large project can be a daunting task but rpmi are in the process of planning a massive awareness campaign, to educate their staff and put their SIP into action.

When asked about the benefit gained already from the Gap Analysis and Security Improvement Plan, Ken commented:

***“The whole process has been enlightening. We have a better understanding of the standard and how to apply this to our business. The management team are more aware of the work involved in gaining certification to the standard. We also have greater visibility into our working practises and a better understanding of basic security issues.”***

Ken Walls, Production Manager, rpmi

“I have enjoyed working on the project so far” comments Ken. “It has been especially prominent for me and the Network Control team as the procedures we have begun to implement support and enhance the IT departments working practises whilst at the same time ensuring we comply with best industry practice.”

rpmi intend to gain certification to the international global standard ISO27001 in March 2008.

