



Customer Testimonial

Facilities Management

Remgro
Limited



“it almost feels like WorkPool was written specifically for us, it was exactly what we wanted.”

Belinda Crause

Manager: Facilities Administration and Corporate Travel

“It does wonders for us! I can’t go through a day if it isn’t there. It works 100% and is 100% reliable.”

Monica Hickman

Company Facilities Coordinator



What makes your building special?

MH: Our building has been assigned a 5-star “Green Star” rating both as an “as built” and “by design” status. “By design” means the building was designed to be Green, however this does not always work out as intended. Therefore “as built” is assigned to indicate that it actually delivers on this promise.

BC: At this point we are the only building in South Africa that has been rebuilt with a 5 star green rating. Other new buildings are going up as we speak based on the successes and lessons learned from the work done on this building. Our building runs on its own building management system (BMS) that we monitor and manage. This includes everything from grey water to potable water, permeable paving, HVAC, heating and cooling systems and so on. Going green is the right thing to do, but that said it is not always the most convenient nor does it take personal comfort into consideration. Going green and delivering on this in the spirit it was intended is an ongoing, long term commitment that can also be quite costly. Many people seek the initial accolades and the star ratings in going green but not many embrace this in the long run, which defeats the whole purpose. Living a green building is not easy and it takes a lot of discipline.

How would you explain WorkPool to other people?

MH: WorkPool is an admin system that helps you get things done and stay up to date. It is something you use daily in your way of living at work and allows you to do your job efficiently. WorkPool helps us reduce our risks or, in certain cases, eliminate them entirely due to the structure it provides. Very few things can go wrong now and when they do we have a plan in place.

BC: WorkPool is a tool that helps us minimise risk, optimise recurrence of tasks and comply with relevant legislation and certifications that typically go with facilities management and the controls around it. If you do not listen to WorkPool you are actually negligent in terms of the consequences. We document everything on WorkPool. It is our proof. It is our rule book. Everything is visible so everyone is informed. You cannot forget or say you didn’t know. As someone who is ultimately accountable for the actions of the team, it is a big comfort to me and gives me peace of mind because I know that WorkPool ensures we have efficient and effective control over the management of the facilities, including contractors, equipment maintenance and so on. We have so many company policies, risk registers and governance responsibilities to consider, including reporting back on this to the business to prove our delivery and performance. WorkPool helps us with all of this.

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Why did you choose WorkPool and not another facilities management solution?

MH: We understood WorkPool and it understood our requirements. Everything just made sense to us in the presentation unlike the other software we looked at. We asked a question and were shown on the system how it works, what you have to do, how to link things and where you find your inbox. It was so simple and it made complete sense based on our environment and requirements. It felt like the other software options were too complicated for normal people who just wanted to do their job.

BC: The steps were too complex and there were too many routes to follow in the other systems to get something basic done. In WorkPool the various components talk to each other. If you load something on a new task then it automatically links to the correct directory folder and the person who will be doing the work so you can find something quickly and easily using any of those criteria. When you look at something in WorkPool you can see all the relevant information in one place, you don't have to wonder what happened before or after, or if someone remembered to do something. The software was applicable to us and would do what we wanted. It wasn't something that someone had to adapt for our needs.

Also, WorkPool was very affordable! This was a big surprise to us. So our budget and requirements matched very well with WorkPool's offer. We reviewed other products as per our policy. In comparison though WorkPool's price was very reasonable and completely justifiable for what we wanted. We are not shooting down any of the other companies; their software typically covered a much bigger area of business and included things that were meant to be used by other departments, but it was a total overkill for us. We didn't want something where our solution was an add-on to something bigger; we wanted our own. We spoke to people at other companies who do what we do and they expressed their challenges in trying to make something work that wasn't written specifically for facilities-management only. They had to change the way they do things and pushed themselves to try and make the system work. This scared me because it meant that our requirements are not the core focus of the programme. In comparison, with WorkPool it almost feels like it was written specifically for us as it was exactly what we wanted. WorkPool was a standalone solution, specifically for our purposes.

MH: WorkPool focussed on our needs and didn't go into all the other things like finance, HR, or payroll that we didn't want or need. Basically, it's customised to what we wanted in our department and could show us how WorkPool would achieve that. WorkPool's costing played a big part in our motivation to management, but it was also our own buy-in and motivation that WorkPool would be a fit for our requirements. There were already so many systems in all the departments so the concern from the business was that if we add another system then there must be a good reason for it and we must commit to use it. We said we would and we did.

Life before WorkPool?

MH: It was very difficult before WorkPool. There was no structure and we couldn't really keep track of things. We had to use a calendar and lists to remind us of things like when warrantees expire, contract expirations, letter of good standing expirations, etc. We had no call logging system apart from when people sent emails. Documents like contracts, SLAs, warrantees and building plans were filed in an actual filing cabinet and nothing was really electronic. We also weren't allowed to use unsecure tools like Dropbox to share documents. I was constantly giving feedback to stakeholders and Belinda to say what the status of something was, what we are busy with, what we had done and so on. A lot of time went into communicating feedback. People also logged or reported things more than once as the team members didn't know what was going on. This caused a lot of unnecessary communication. We could change all of these things and use a secure system when we changed over to WorkPool. WorkPool fits our requirements so nicely it almost feels like it was created especially for us which is why it is fantastic. It really is something that we use on a daily basis.

Continued ...

Life before WorkPool? (continued)

BC: It wasn't practical for Monica to keep telling me everything. I also couldn't remember all of it, so I ended up making sticky notes of everything, which is very inefficient. People used to catch us walking down the passage and report a problem, e.g. a toilet is leaking, and we would then have to give that person an update based on what we knew at the time. Now, no one tells us about things anymore because most often we know of something even before they report it. The people have confidence in us and know that if they report something it goes into the system and it gets resolved. Of course there is still some manual intervention and manual communication; it wouldn't be normal if we did not have that.

I think a lack of systems, or a system that works as well as WorkPool does for us, is the reason why so many of the teams and departments in a business that does "housekeeping" have a bad reputation. We receive compliments all the time from contractors on how structured we are, how neat and tidy premises are and how well we deal with the "green" things which are actually quite complicated. We pick things up quickly and attend to them early, can diagnose things ourselves and even provide a prognosis on issues.

What do you use WorkPool for?

MH: Our team is responsible for seeing that the facilities are managed and maintained so things function as they should and to ensure the "as built" status is retained. So in short, if the manual or rules say something should work and be maintained in a certain way we are responsible to ensure it does. WorkPool plays a pivotal part in this. Honestly, the program does wonders for us! I can't go through a day if WorkPool isn't there. We capture everything on WorkPool, all of our actions and reminders. The people on our team all perform different functions, but we use WorkPool to communicate, assign and track tasks and to follow-up on or record our progress. This means everything is visible to everyone and we are all in the loop on what is happening. Once a task has been completed we can sign it off and it is linked and filed in the correct place if we need to find it again later on. If you want to search for anything you can find it easily. It works 100% and is 100% reliable. I have not had a single time where I could not get into WorkPool for a day.

BC: We have many responsibilities and several systems to contend with. Our BMS for example will report changes or issues and warnings for us to attend to and all of this is reported in WorkPool and dealt with. WorkPool contains all of our contacts and contractors; everything and everyone that makes this building work from the garden services to electrical to HVAC to Coastal to Security. Even the pool cars are listed on WorkPool.

Any action or potential lack of action that has consequences, often serious consequences, is stored on WorkPool in a folder and everything is up to date. We do not have to worry about old information or incorrect contractor information. All of our contractors are on WorkPool and their documentation is always in order so it gives me great peace of mind. If anyone pops into my office and asks me who the contractor was that did a specific job, I can find the information instantly and send it on via email. I am so happy that we could find something that worked and was customised to the T for us and is so user-friendly. It is not an overkill and you don't need a degree to use WorkPool; anyone who knows how to work with a computer can work on WorkPool. We can't find any fault with it and I cannot think that there is anything else WorkPool can do to enhance it further. We are very happy with it.

What do you like most about WorkPool?

MH: I like the task list. I like that you can complete a task and it is gone from your list or that it stays on your list until you've completed it. I like the reminders and that updates on tasks are immediately visible to all other people including the history if you need to go back and check up on something. To me WorkPool is effective, reliable and user-friendly.

BC: I like the accessibility of data, to the information that you are actually looking for and that WorkPool keeps people accountable. WorkPool is very cost effective. It helps us stick to the schedule, to be proactive and not reactive. You save the company a lot of money if you have a proactive facilities team. We are better at identifying and pre-empting things, because when it is on WorkPool we are aware of it and a decision can be made. It makes us more efficient, minimises risk and prevents unnecessary costs through maintenance. If you pick something up and attend to it early, the costs are much lower, which is the bottom line that Finance looks at.

What were the main implementation challenges?

MH: The initial loading of the information was a challenge. We had to check from A to Z that we had loaded everything. Then we had to load the recurring tasks and add all our documents. It was all new to me, but, with WorkPool's assistance and training, it became easy from then on. WorkPool helped us get started by loading some of the information for us, so there was a structure, but they left some of it for me to do which helped because then I could change things and make it my own and it stuck.

BC: It was important to have that initial support from WorkPool. Not everyone is on the same technological level and we don't all use WorkPool in the same way every day. Some people just do what they need to do and anything outside it still makes them unsure, so we have to help them from time to time. This type of change management is not unique to WorkPool though. WorkPool's manual is still on my desk because I mostly "look" and do not log work, so if I need to do something I too sometimes have to go and look it up or double check if I forgot anything.

MH: There is obviously a big responsibility on the user to load things on WorkPool when new things come up. That takes discipline. We must just make sure we stay up to date so that if you are sick or on holiday that it is easy for other people to gain access to the information.

What benefits have you derived through the process?

- **Less communication and miscommunication.** People don't ask us as much in passing anymore as they know things happen.
- **Our risk management reduced significantly.** We have documented and categorised all of our risks and it is managed on WorkPool. When the business asks us what controls we have in place to deal with something we can say it is managed in WorkPool and WorkPool will alert us or keep track of it. A risk may still be big but at least you have something in place to manage or minimise it which is a big comfort and gives us peace of mind. Risks can also be reviewed and reported on as part of audits or reviews. The management team was quite impressed by how well we could illustrate and deal with their "what if" scenarios around things like disasters and how we ensure quality control. We have even had requests from the business to load items managed by other departments in WorkPool, like the UPS, because the workflow is so good. We don't take responsibility for managing these but we can flag things and make sure they happen or people are notified.
- **More structure and more discipline.** It is easy to follow and track things. Anyone can see where we are on a task, e.g. did the contractor get back to us. You can at any time go through your list and see exactly what is still outstanding and who you are waiting on. A task cannot disappear so we are more disciplined in taking ownership of a problem and seeing it through. In the past everything was manual; you had to remember or make notes somewhere in your calendar and hope it comes up before you leave the company's employ. Lots of things fell through the cracks. With WorkPool it is not like that anymore. The reminders come up and you do it. Before, you had to first figure out everything you had to do, but now that everything is loaded and in place, it is very very good.
- **Audit trail of events.** If someone tells you telephonically they will do X, Y and Z, but then doesn't do it or forgets to send you an email to confirm, you can still record the communication and update the system. A week later you, or anyone, can pick up if something should have been done that wasn't.
- **Informed team members provide a better service.** We record everything on WorkPool, from "there is a hole in the ground" to "the toilets stink". So all you need to do is scroll through the list of events in the morning and you can see everything that is going on. Everyone in the department knows what is going on too and can give feedback in conversations. People are often surprised when they mention something and we confirm we already know about it and are looking at it – great service.
- **Appreciation and understanding for what we do.** WorkPool brings visibility to all the work we do. People don't always understand what is actually involved in managing a building and can be quick to complain. Now people can see what we do and the level of detail that is involved in sorting things out. We receive a lot of compliments from management who recognise and appreciate that we run the building so well but it is because we comply with what WorkPool tells us to do. When something comes up in a meeting where we did something well they would say it is because we have WorkPool. If something does go wrong we can always prove the actions we took to prevent it.

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What benefits have you derived through the process? (continued)

- **Staff empowerment.** Everything we do is now visible and people can be held accountable for what they do. It also means we can be evaluated in an objective way and recognise when we perform. This visibility of effort and responsibility has translated into tangible benefits and recognition for our team.
- **Access to information.** All our documents are on WorkPool, including: building plans, design plans, instructions on how we need to do things, etc. So if anything happens and a contractor does not know what to do we can just get the document from WorkPool. We even add sketches e.g. of the pumps to indicate corrosion, other damage, rain that comes in and so on.
- **More effective contractor management.** We keep track of all of our contractors on WorkPool including their letter of good standing or whatever we need to profile them on. If someone takes a chance we take them off WorkPool and we don't use them anymore as they get flagged. We can track their status and confirm everything is in order instantly. We can also see if someone quoted for something or made a promise and didn't deliver. We recently had a case where a contractor dropped us and we had to take action to get our money back and appoint a new contract. We had the entire history, including photos on WorkPool. We can also go back and see what other people/contractors did and figure things out for ourselves if we need to.
- **Project Management.** We recently built on a new storeroom to store things securely and in line with health and safety - that whole project is on WorkPool. The quotes, the plans, who did the work as well as the timelines.
- We also **manage company vehicles and pool car drivers** on WorkPool. It is important that our drivers' medical and licenses are all up to date including their driving skills and practical driving skills. We have a record on WorkPool of all the vehicle registration documents, drivers' licenses, medical certificates and so on.

How much money do you think WorkPool has saved your business?

BC: I can assure you the number is big, a few hundred thousand Rand. This is because we can manage things effectively and prevent things from going wrong or getting worse. Things would not be ordered without WorkPool; it isn't directly responsible for the cost savings but indirectly it is.

MH: When we moved into the building we didn't have our own maintenance guy and the project managers told us we would need to appoint an electrician, someone with plumbing experience, a supervisor groundsman and so on. They wanted us to appoint all these people or contractors to help run the building. We still had a project team in the first year to help us with things so we decided to wait and see. In the end, because we have a system that can help us control what must be done, how it must be done and by when, we did not have to employ or contract all these people.

An example of this is the permeable paving that we can maintain ourselves. It would have cost us R36,000 each time to sweep in the grid so the bricks stay porous, etc. We could set up the rules and the checks for this in WorkPool and convince the company that we can take this on ourselves. We were not only able to bring down the costs but were also able to keep our guarantee because we follow the manual/worksheet and take photos that we upload on WorkPool as proof. If something goes wrong we can go back and review the entire history.

How critical is WorkPool to your business?

BC: WorkPool is included in our disaster planning. Our I.T. team is fully aware of the importance of WorkPool in case of a disaster and in cases when we need a business rescue. WorkPool is classified as more important than our business aircraft tracking, because we can still do that manually. Without WorkPool we can only work on memory and then we would need to find a way to keep track of things and manage information to keep things together. WorkPool is one of the systems that must be available within a few minutes of a disaster for us to get back online. For example, if the building is destroyed, everyone must leave. Some people can still work remotely, but who needs to be here? Our team. We need to be on site and we need access to information to manage contractors, assessors, etc. We won't have any of that information without WorkPool. Contractors ask us what materials to use or what was done initially because they won't know or can't remember.

All of our equipment is loaded on WorkPool, both expensive and inexpensive. We keep track of all of the documents, warranties and guarantees, etc. Even the trees on our premises are numbered and listed in WorkPool! We track which ones have been pruned and sprayed.

