



Client Profile

Capital & Regional is a specialist property company focusing on retail and leisure investments in the UK and Germany. The Group uses in-house asset and property management teams to maximise the returns from its properties for both investors and tenants.

Its Shopping Centre team has applied asset management skills to over 25 UK shopping centres over the past ten years. The Mall Fund, a specialist UK community Shopping Centre brand, comprises of nine properties with a total lettable space of over 4.6 million square feet and home to over 1,000 retail units. The company also owns and manages Xscape Braehead, Kingfisher Shopping Centre in Redditch and Waterside Shopping Centre in Lincoln.



Business Situation

Shopping Centre management are renowned for being demanding in their desire for accurate visitor counting data. Capital & Regional uses traffic counting as a key method of reporting that can influence a number of operational activities, from marketing and promotions and weekly performance analysis, to CEO-led City presentations and as a tool to drive new retail lettings.

Capital & Regional had been using a foot traffic provider for a number of years. However employees throughout the organisation, from Shopping Centre General Managers through to the CEO, were beginning to feel frustrated at the level of service being delivered. The data was being used to measure success against competitors and the National Index, and therefore needed to be consistently accurate as well as providing on-demand, professional reporting and the ability to respond quickly to concerns or enquiries. Capital & Regional's CEO took the decision that the required level of service was not being met by the existing solution and put together a team to review alternative offerings in the market.

“Shopper traffic counting is a key tool for us to measure the performance of individual centres or the group as a whole. This makes it critical that the data we receive is both accurate and available, whenever we need it. ShopperTrak fulfils both of these criteria, as well as offering a dedicated service and a real passion for our business.”

– Martin Macwhinnie, Regional Operations Manager, Capital & Regional



Solution

The team was led by Martin Macwhinnie, Regional Operations Manager, Capital & Regional, and Stephen Rister, Project Manager and included Mall general managers as part of the working party. After looking at four potential solutions providers, including the incumbent, three vendors were invited to pitch. ShopperTrak was the only company that demonstrated a real understanding of the brief in terms of the accuracy and availability required of the data. The company also offered the most advanced technology, using video as opposed to the existing thermal imaging which was overly susceptible to changes in light and weather. A decision was taken to install ShopperTrak across the entire shopping centre portfolio.

Challenges

Although it was clear to Capital & Regional that ShopperTrak would perform better overall, there were financial as well as operational and emotional issues to contend with before the contract could commence. The team at Capital & Regional quickly established that the long term savings offered by ShopperTrak justified the capital expenditure. The next challenge was to ensure that the system was up and running in three months and that the quality of the data would convince the Centre Managers, who relied on traffic counting both for themselves and their retailers, that the move to a new vendor was worthwhile. Capital & Regional and ShopperTrak ran the new solution alongside the existing system for a period of six weeks. Significant discrepancies appeared in the data captured from the existing provider's equipment making it very difficult to draw meaningful comparisons. The system therefore had to operate for 12 months on a realignment basis, running ShopperTrak against the previous year's data and making adjustments were necessary. The ShopperTrak data remained consistent throughout this

period and the incumbent data was discarded at the end of the 12 months.

Results

After a painless and on schedule implementation the overall feeling at Capital & Regional is that ShopperTrak has been a very positive change for the business. The data is both accurate and available and the reporting can be delivered in numerous formats, customised for different stakeholders within the business. Parameters can be set within the system so that General Managers are only alerted when variations hit an agreed level and all retailers are given access to the data to encourage collaboration. The ShopperTrak team has been more responsive and committed to the business which will hopefully see the solution rolled out across additional sites in the future.

“Changing the system was a significant business decision for us, given the length of time that the existing solution had been in place. We looked at the pros and cons and knew that the safe option was to stick with the existing provider. Fortunately we didn't get to be the company we are today by playing safe! We definitely made the right decision.”

– Martin Macwhinnie,
Regional Operations
Manager, Capital &
Regional