

Richmond Pharmacology selects *Scheduler™* from Linksfeld Technologies

## How Optimising Scheduling Has Maximised Business Value

Richmond Pharmacology is the UK's only Early Phase Clinical Research Organisation (CRO) to conduct trials from within NHS Teaching Hospitals. As one of Europe's leading Early Phase CRO's, Richmond Pharmacology has over 150 employees, operates across multiple sites, schedules hundreds of thousands of tasks every year and coordinates over 10,000 shift schedules. They needed a robust yet flexible scheduling system to address the complex array of trials timetables, volunteers, screening requirements and medical staff, that would maximise their delivery of clinical solutions. Richmond Pharmacology traditionally used a manual system of scheduling which became time consuming for their Medical Director to calculate every week, additionally running the risk of scheduling conflicts. Richmond Pharmacology recognized how getting their scheduling 'right' was not only complex but a key strategy to adding real business value.

A critical part of Richmond Pharmacology's business is optimising schedules for trials and allowing their senior staff to focus on core issues, rather than creating manually-generated timetables. They therefore needed a software solution that was

bespoke and flexible to allow for Richmond's tight protocol for trial tasks, for the skill sets needed for each study and compliance with staffing needs such as shift work and shift breaks. The solution also had to be performance intensive and robust, so that once the tasks for each trial were determined by the Medical Director and the drug company, scheduling could be handled by a variety of administrative staff easily and efficiently.

Linksfeld Technologies, one of the UK's leading technology services companies, was chosen initially to advise on improving the process of scheduling at Richmond Pharmacology and to identify the areas of the process that lent themselves for automation. The strategic and software development phases resulted in a bespoke solution – *Scheduler™*.

In 2003 the first implementation of Linksfeld's *Scheduler™* for Richmond Pharmacology was launched at one hospital. Because Linksfeld built *Scheduler™* with expansion in mind, when Richmond Pharmacology opened an additional site they were able to seamlessly cope with the added complexity. *Scheduler™* incorporates functionality to facilitate Richmond's strict protocol on precise



### Immediate Benefits

*Scheduler™* has a number of features that show immediate benefits to Richmond Pharmacology, including –

- Integrity checks to eliminate inconsistencies
- Peak loading analysis
- Allocation of staff to tasks, according to their skill set
- Idle time analysis (a list of times when staff members are not allocated to any task)
- Transparent Project Management and reporting.
- Reports from *Scheduler™* include:
  - ◇ A master list showing all staff and all tasks
  - ◇ A daily list showing which rounds each person is doing
  - ◇ A per-study report giving the tasks and associated details for a particular study
  - ◇ Reporting from labs and screening rooms

timings, volunteer schedules, round assignments and resourcing requirements. *Scheduler™* also provides a variety of user-generated reports that allow the Medical Director to oversee the process. Through *Scheduler™*, Project Managers produce a list of tasks for each study, including dosing times and intervals, the number of subjects and any associated randomization plans that are needed. Based on the criteria for each trial, *Scheduler™* automates the lab cover requirements, screening room cover requirements and allocates rounds to medical staff. *Scheduler™* also provides reports which can integrate into Richmond Pharmacology's back office systems to reconcile shift schedules with payroll systems. Modules to incorporate schedules for catering staff and the kitchen rota are being launched in 2006.

*Scheduler™* incorporates a certain degree of manual intervention, which is necessary to optimize the scheduling process. With dedicated Scheduling Managers and Assistants, Richmond Pharmacology can ensure that their staff needs are being met and that further optimisation can be made. As part of their ongoing service to Richmond Pharmacology, Linksfeld provides training sessions for new employees using *Scheduler™* and refresher workshops for staff, incorporating functionality updates and new features.

Explains Medical Director, Dr Ulrike Lorch, "Coordinating trials schedules along with the skill set needed for each stage of the process is a critical matter. We ensure that all our timings and tasks are to the minute and that the right staff are there when needed. It's a great time-saver that *Scheduler™* is easy to use and intuitive. Our scheduling team was able to get working on the task lists and rota schedules after their first day of training, saving me hours of spread-sheet work on shifts. Having the automated scheduling system makes it easier for us to ensure there are no conflicts, allowing me more time to oversee the medical process."

Linksfeld maintains the application development and enhancements and takes a proactive approach to monthly maintenance, including servers. "We wanted to produce for Richmond Pharmacology a software solution that would not only help them automate a complex scheduling process but that in the long term would optimize their resourcing and enhance their service to their Customers," said Jonathan Shapiro, Director at Linksfeld.



"We recognized the problem with our manual scheduling but not how to get to an ideal solution. When Linksfeld came in to help us they were able to see right away how complex and intricate our needs are. As our business processes have evolved, *Scheduler™* has evolved as well, now giving us the optimal use of scheduling and resourcing. This allows us to focus on service delivery to our customers, and ultimately gives us competitive advantage in the industry."

**Dr. Jorg Taubel**  
**Managing Director,**  
**Richmond Pharmacology**

#### About Linksfeld Technologies

Linksfeld Technologies is a leading technology consulting and IT services practice that helps organisations to meet their business goals by 'Putting Technology to Work'. Founded in 1999, a team of technologists with proven business experience, Linksfeld Technologies covers a broad sweep of technological areas, and prides itself on delivering high quality technology advice, software services, project execution and ongoing support to customers. As an added service, Linksfeld Resourcing places talented technology people on both short term and long term placements. Headquartered in London, UK, the Linksfeld group of companies has a client base spanning both the private and public sectors. Linksfeld Technologies is an IBM Business Partner, a Microsoft Partner and a member of the Society for IT Management (Socitm).

  
**Putting technology to work™**

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