



# Case Study

## Mears Group

Mears Group is best known for its social housing repairs and maintenance work. The company's operations, however, extend to new builds, contact centres and domiciliary care.

With more than 300 branches and approaching 20,000 staff in the UK, the business has a turnover of more than £900mil. per year. The IT team, based in Exeter and Bournemouth, has a budget of over £6mil. and employs 122 people.

### The Challenge

As an organisation, Mears Group has grown rapidly through acquisitions – and every time a new company is brought into the group, the IT team is required to react quickly to get the business on board.

To meet this requirement, Group IT Director John Brett wanted the ability to purchase IT equipment at a moment's notice – but at the same time ensure the group was getting the best price.

*"We often have business challenges where we can have numerous contract mobilisations starting within the same week. We can't just sit back and wait for quotes to come in. But then we also need to be confident that we are getting value,"* said John

*"As we get bigger, the scrutiny from shareholders is growing, and I don't want to be asked why I bought at X when I could have bought at Y."*

*"When external auditors carry out their reviews of our department, I can't turn around and say, 'well, we have a really good relationship with a local supplier'. We need a better response."*

John also had a further challenge when the IT team sourced a reasonable price on the internet. Suppliers would often not have enough stock to fulfil the requirements.

*"If we need 1,000 Android phones, we don't want to be sourcing them from different channels at different prices and with different return policies. That's what we call 'dirty procurement',"* he said.

*"We just want to know the product is available and we are not compromising on cost."*

*"We got our ROI immediately. I admit, there was scepticism within the team at first, but after just one purchase, everyone was a convert,"*



Mears Group decided to deploy KnowledgeBus, a benchmarking application for IT procurers that automates the comparison of purchases against daily trade guide prices and stock levels on over 1,500,000 products from over 4,500 manufacturers while maintaining CIPS Corporate Certification.

Users upload supplier product lists or conduct spot checks to see what margin their supplier is proposing. A range of spend analysis tools also helps users identify, track and forecast market developments for more strategic procurement.

KnowledgeBus empowers IT buyers with market knowledge to rapidly negotiate better deals with preferred suppliers to unlock more from budgets. It saves users time, consistently achieving the best value.

Mears uses KnowledgeBus' optional Procurement Hub as a value-added service, which provides total purchasing reassurance by enabling customers to buy products at a guaranteed cost +3%.

If existing suppliers don't align with expectations, the Procurement Hub provides a fail-safe.

## The Results

Within the first month of using KnowledgeBus, Mears Group's IT team saved **£40,000 on just one purchase** of 2,000 smartphones. *"We got our ROI immediately. I admit, there was scepticism within the team at first, but after just one purchase, everyone was a convert,"* said John. *"We quickly saw that we could buy 90% of our products cheaper using KnowledgeBus. When we reviewed past purchases, we also saw that one supplier had charged us a 45% margin on an order of phones. We took this up with them and received a retrospective credit note."*

Mears Group's IT team has made KnowledgeBus a fundamental part of its procurement process. *"We now don't buy anything unless it has gone through the portal,"* said John. *"The admin team was concerned this would add an extra step in the process, but it saves them time as they can request suppliers' quotes through the portal, which reduces the phone calls they need to make, and this has made them extremely happy."*

Using KnowledgeBus with its Procurement Hub price guarantee has given Mears Group the confidence to acquire all products at the best value, either from existing suppliers or via the Procurement Hub. *"Realising that the price listed was the worst-case scenario was huge for us,"* said John. *"It's not like Google shopping, as you know the prices you are seeing are valid. We initially thought we would have to negotiate hard to get the prices displayed, but the guaranteed price has made a big difference. We no longer have to deal with rogue suppliers charging huge margins."*

Mears Group is now taking advantage of KnowledgeBus' ability to identify price trends to determine when and when not to buy. *"Product prices change all the time. For example, we know that the price of an Android phone is likely to fluctuate by around 3% over a fortnight – and that the cost of a new mobile will plummet after around six months,"* said John.

*"If we need something, we won't hang around forever, but KnowledgeBus allows us to ride out interim price increases. And for the day-to-day stuff, that's great."*

*"We no longer have to deal with rogue suppliers charging huge margins."*

John Brett, Group IT Director . Mears Group

The UK's only fully Certified IT Price Benchmarking Solution – Find out more at [www.knowledgebus.co.uk](http://www.knowledgebus.co.uk)

