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OBS SUCCESS STORY

WSAA



**WATER SERVICES ASSOCIATION
OF AUSTRALIA**

Introduction

The Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) is the peak industry association for Australia's urban water utilities. WSAA provides water and wastewater services through its members, to 16 million Australians and most of Australia's largest industrial and commercial enterprises.

WSAA performs advocacy and research work for the urban water industry comprising of 33 members and 29 associate members, as well as coordinating and developing national research and environmental programs.

The organisation serves its members by promoting knowledge sharing, networking and cooperation for the benefit of the urban water industry; identifying emerging issues of importance to the urban water industry, and developing strategic responses. WSAA develops an industry-wide approach to national water policy issues as well as delivering projects and research outcomes of national significance.

Challenge

Following a review of its 33 members in 2008, WSAA discovered that ninety per cent of the industry's current workforce would be retiring over the next decade, and that its biggest challenge would be the retention of industry expertise and knowledge.

Based on this research, the WSAA Board of Directors devised a knowledge management strategy, including the creation of a website and extranet to

facilitate collaboration and knowledge management between members that would enable information and intelligence to be shared, captured and passed on to the next generation workforce.

WSAA's website was running on an old legacy content management system that was outdated in look and functionality. The website lacked a collaborative and networking environment which made it difficult to capture industry data and knowledge. It also hindered the transfer of knowledge from the retiring workforce to the new workforce.

WSAA wanted to provide extra value to its members by enhancing their access to its own comprehensive range of information, research tools and resources.

According to WSAA's General Manager Grant Leslie, "The driving aim was to save our members time and money. Our members spend about \$20 million a year on research and development (R&D) and, with no forum to share this; it inevitably led in some cases to a double up in activities and costs."

WSAA wanted to implement a 'fail proof', flexible website and intranet to facilitate and capture knowledge share that was cost effective and easy to use. "Our goal for the solution was to save about a one per cent spend in R&D costs for our members. Obviously there would be other benefits and gains, but if members can share knowledge and work together on projects, that is invaluable" Grant said.

Solution

After extensive research WSAA decided that Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007's flexible, innovative platform provided the solution to WSAA's knowledge management needs, at an affordable price.



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Grant said, "We invited five Microsoft SharePoint Partners to tender on our scope of work, then we short listed our options and moved to a formal proposal submission. We then conducted a multi-criteria analysis on those tenders and scored them with points." The outcome of this multi-criteria analysis was that OBS was the successful bidder for this project.

Challenge

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"In the end it came down to who we thought would do the better job. OBS has a very good reputation, extensive experience in our industry, and is on the forefront of all things SharePoint. I found it very comforting that they really knew what they were talking about." Grant said. Grant went on to say that as "Cost was also a factor in our decision and, as OBS offered a fixed rate project, we knew we wouldn't have any hidden surprises at the end of the project, which was reassuring."

As part of OBS's project implementation process, one of the most important and initial steps was to get clear confirmation of what the expected results of the project are.

"The OBS team spent time understanding our business and talking to key stakeholders so they could deliver what we wanted, and they worked hard to get the right look and feel. They were flexible, reliable, and we knew we could work well with them," Grant said.

Outcome

WSAA's new look website has a fresh, updated feel and an improved content management system.

The new, secure extranet allows members to share knowledge, resources and research tools.

"The public face is more professional, which is important to us, and the flexibility we have now is incredible compared to what we had – for instance, we can control and change the way the site looks, down to the way the pages are displayed and developed." Grant said.

WSAA members now have an extranet in which they can network, share ideas and contribute to research. They have embraced using new methods of communication, such as blogs, wikis, discussion boards, and calendars.

Grant said, "OBS has provided us with an up-to-date website and extranet that met all the collaborative requirements that we have requested."

In addition, project teams have been created around areas of common interest, and members across Australia and New Zealand are able to contribute to policies, benchmarking and strategies.

"The site is definitely easier to use now too. We can now manage the bookshop section on the website, and can separate the publications into different areas and types, making them easier to manage and to locate." Grant said.

WSAA is enjoying the opportunity to share information with its members through both the website and extranet. The knowledge management strategy was devised with a two year rollout and over the next year WSAA will be working on further enhancing the way they interact with members using both the website and extranet. This includes increasing the provision of information online, introducing podcasts and using member surveys to improve WSAA services.

Grant said, "Overall it has been a great outcome. The OBS team was easy to work with, the implementation to members was easy, and we are very happy with the result. Most importantly, we have received good feedback from our members which is great."

<http://www.wsaa.asn.au>