

DET Victoria Saves up to \$208,000 a Year with Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007

Overview

Country or Region: Australia

Industry: Education

Customer Profile

The Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) provides high-quality primary and secondary education and training and further education services across the state.

Business Situation

DET wanted to streamline the processes of applying for network access and annual leave; find a better way to store, prepare and distribute meeting notes for executives; and move departmental news updates from email to an intranet.

Solution

Working with Microsoft Gold Certified Partner OBS, DET ran a pilot project to automate two manual processes and implement a meeting workspace using Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007.

Benefits

- Potential savings of A\$208,000 a year.
- Streamlined business processes.
- Improved collaboration and business insight.
- Enhanced ability to meet strategic goals.
- Better compliance and risk mitigation.

“Faster workflows, higher quality data, easier access to information and increased opportunities for staff collaboration will have a positive impact on our business.”

Tamara Simunek, Group Manager Information Technology, Department of Education and Training Victoria

The Department of Education and Training Victoria (DET) plays a pivotal role in providing policy and planning advice and delivering education and training to people of all ages in the Australian state of Victoria. As one of the country's largest technology users, DET is always seeking to maximize returns on its IT investment. When DET and Microsoft Gold Certified Partner OBS identified productivity and efficiency problems with manual business processes such as applying for annual leave, disseminating news and organizing meetings, it decided to trial Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007 as the basis of a new intranet that would centralize information management, automate business processes and enhance collaboration. Independent analyst BearingPoint found Office SharePoint Server 2007 could generate savings of A\$208,000 per year through streamlined business processes, improved productivity, increased collaboration and mitigated risk through better compliance.

Situation

Education is difficult and expensive to deliver, especially across a country as large as Australia. In the state of Victoria alone, more than 51,000 full-time equivalent staff are employed in this endeavor.

The Department of Education and Training Victoria (DET) plans, provides, funds, purchases and regulates education and training services for people of all ages across the state through schools, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges, registered training organizations and higher education institutions.

DET's Information Technology Division (ITD) is responsible for the Department's information and communications technology infrastructure, applications development and other technology services vital to its effective operation and management.

Because DET uses a range of technology platforms and functions across different business units, it did not have one common place where office staff could go for information or to generate reports. This affected all corporate users, particularly management staff who did not have a holistic view of DET operations.

When staff needed to apply for access to network resources, they had to fill in a paper form. It could take up to 10 working days before an applicant received access. Because of the inefficiencies of this process, double handling and multiple instances of the same request were commonplace.

"Typically, DET employees had no idea which network drive to request, so the IT service desk had to provide this information before a request form could be completed," says Tamara Simunek, Group Manager Information Technology, Department of Education and Training Victoria. "Often, the

service desk would need to rework the application to obtain the appropriate approvals once the request had been placed for the correct network drive.

"The leave application process was equally awkward. Staff would complete paper forms and pass them to their managers, who would approve them and then send them through internal mail to Human Resources. HR staff would then enter the data into the system. The whole process could take up to five days."

Information about meetings for ITD managers and various DET committees was distributed by email. There was no central place to store meeting-related documentation. This made it difficult for staff to get a comprehensive understanding of the critical topics to be discussed at meetings.

Meeting productivity also suffered because it was difficult to ensure that all participants had the same versions of documents. Materials were passed from inbox to inbox for serial reviews, which made the decision-making process even longer.

Distributing departmental news by email increased network traffic and storage requirements; a copy of every news message was stored in each staff member's mailbox.

"Some staff maintained individual news archives, placing additional pressure on the Department's storage resources," says Simunek. "The majority of these archives were stored on high-availability network or email servers, making our IT infrastructure expensive to support and maintain."

Solution

DET and Microsoft Gold Certified Partner OBS implemented a pilot project using Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007. The trial

involved automating two manual processes – applications for network access and annual leave. OBS also built a new meeting workspace using Microsoft® Windows® SharePoint Services – a built-in component of Microsoft® Windows Server™ 2003.

DET tested the workspace to ascertain how it could improve the way senior ITD staff and various DET committees managed their meetings.

The pilot also changed the Department's communication process by moving news delivery from email to the intranet.

Brett Campbell, Director of Sales and Marketing at OBS, says Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 allows organizations such as DET to take advantage of advanced out-of-the-box features immediately after installation.

“Using the new workflow capabilities built into Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007, we built workflows for network access and leave applications in a matter of days and had them ready for user testing within five days,” says Campbell.

The meeting workspaces give managers and committees centralized locations for storing all meeting information. Committees and managers now have their own meeting sites, linked to their Microsoft® Office Outlook® calendars.

Minutes and other meeting-related documents can be saved into the meeting workspace then distributed to the relevant audience for approval. Once approved, all documents are available for members of the meeting site to view, save and reuse.

“The new intranet stores our information systems and reporting tools in one place, and email collaboration and business process

information is integrated from Edumail, our Department-wide electronic messaging system,” says Simunek

Benefits

As part of the pilot project, Microsoft engaged independent business analyst BearingPoint to measure the potential impact of the Microsoft solution. BearingPoint found that the project demonstrated a number of potential savings and strategic benefits.

Potential Efficiency Savings of up to A\$208,000 per Year

BearingPoint found the solution could enhance staff collaboration, reduce the number of manual steps within existing processes and eliminate inefficient activities. Altogether, this has the potential to save DET up to A\$208,000 per year.

The new application process for network access is expected to save as much as A\$113,040 a year. This boost to DET's bottom line will come from eliminating the double handling of requests by service desk officers and reducing lost productivity by giving employees access to network resources sooner.

The annual saving from the new leave application process is expected to reach A\$69,360, a result of reducing the time taken by managers to approve leave.

BearingPoint also found that using meeting workspaces for committee and ITD manager meetings would deliver an annual saving of up to A\$26,472.

“By publishing Department news on our intranet rather than sending emails, we expect to achieve further savings by reducing our network storage needs and cutting the time staff spend trawling through emails to catch up on important news,” says Simunek.

Streamlined Business Processes Improve Productivity

Office SharePoint Server 2007 will allow DET staff to request network access or annual leave through the new intranet. They simply need to launch the relevant application form, which is pre-populated with their personal details and other information already stored in the system. The staff member then completes and submits the form, which is emailed automatically to his or her manager.

Once approved, network access requests are sent to a general manager for final approval and then to ITD for implementation. Leave requests are forwarded automatically to Human Resources. All network access and leave request forms are then stored in a central repository for quick referencing, searching and auditing.

“The new intranet will help us reduce the time required to validate information on the network access application form and to ensure the correct approvals have been obtained,” says Simunek. “It will also reduce double handling of requests at the service desk and cut the time taken to input leave information into the HR system.”

Meeting owners can now create a new workspace in the committee meeting intranet, with document libraries for agenda items, minutes, meeting appointments and a calendar. The meeting owner invites members by email and grants permissions based on user profiles. All documentation and updates for the meeting are centrally driven from the meeting workspace.

After a meeting, the minutes are drafted and sent for review along a workflow built by the meeting owner. Documents are not published until approved by all users on the workflow. An email alert is then dispatched to notify members that the documents are complete and ready for distribution. This has reduced

the amount of work for meeting organizers by approximately 75 percent.

“Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 can help us reduce the time spent circulating meeting information such as agenda, minutes, action items and reading material,” says Simunek. “It can also reduce the number of emails sent to distribute meeting information.”

Meeting Strategic Goals

DET expects that using Office SharePoint Server 2007 to improve collaboration among employees will drive further process efficiencies.

“Faster workflows, higher quality data, easier access to information and increased opportunities for staff collaboration will have a positive impact on our business,” says Simunek. “This will help us use our resources more efficiently and deliver cost savings across the Department.”

The pilot also demonstrated how Office SharePoint Server 2007 could help DET meet strategic objectives such as strengthening the quality of its service delivery, increasing its responsiveness to the community and industry, promoting a culture of collaboration and maintaining sound financial management.

“The project gave us confidence that a wider adoption of Office SharePoint Server 2007 would directly support our corporate priorities,” says Simunek.

Better Compliance Helps Mitigate Risk

The auditing capabilities of Office SharePoint Server 2007 will enhance DET's ability to comply with Human Resources regulations. Management will be able to track, search and retrieve annual leave forms based on the individual user or group. It will also help DET comply with its obligations relating to meeting

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documentation by allowing it to audit meeting minutes and track reference material.

"These enhancements will help us meet our governance and statutory reporting obligations to our executive management and Board and help us comply with internal policies, such as maintaining information that is accurate, auditable and traceable," says Simunek.

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