

Software for the Agile Business.



Victoria's Department of Education, Employment & Training (DEET) creates a paperless office across its 1637 sites

Company Profile

The Department is at the top of every IT list you could imagine: the Number 1 user of IT among Australia's Top 500 companies, the leading user of IT among Australian government departments and the government education body with the best student:computer ratio in the world.

Charged with meeting the needs of approximately 526,000 primary and secondary students in 1,637 government schools, the Department employs 46,500 permanent teachers in addition to another 8,000 employees consisting of casual and relief teachers as well as non-teaching staff. These stakeholders are distributed across the state of Victoria at schools, further education institutions and administrative centres.

Business Scenario

Developing an innovative Intranet

Replacing over 200 paper-based line-of-business office procedures with sophisticated Intranet services is a good way of demonstrating the value of technology within an organisation. This is exactly what DEET set about to accomplish with its department-wide deet@work Intranet. According to Mr. Paul Doherty, General Manager of DEET's Information Technology division, "DEET's size and nature were factors which presented many business challenges to the organisation, requiring unique solutions that were, in many cases, not readily available in the market place."

Providing access to technology

When the Department decided to move ahead with web-based business processes in early 1999 it had already been utilising Microsoft technology for over two years with good results. EduMail, a messaging infrastructure based on Microsoft Exchange, and EduLibrary, which used public folders to publish documentation to school and corporate

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- Mr Paul Doherty
General Manager of IT
Department of Education,
Employment & Training

Organisation

Department of Education,
Employment & Training (DEET)

Web Site

www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/index.htm

Industry

Education

Business Scenario Summary

DEET had an existing Edumail messaging infrastructure and EduLibrary public folder structure built on Exchange. However they

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users, were important forerunners to the Intranet project. Thanks to a 1998 government-funded initiative, designed to raise awareness of and access to Information Technology among teaching staff, every teacher across the state already had their own notebook computer. This had allowed them to come to terms with technology as a tool of their trade, learning how to apply it creatively in the learning process.

The next step was to develop a department-wide Intranet which would provide open access for the first time, to online data content, further acting as a platform upon which the department's range of business processes could be conducted. As well as accessibility, the goal was to eliminate paperwork and unnecessary administrative steps in the processing of documents.

Business Solution

Building the infrastructure

Doherty brought the blueprint of the Intranet home from the Leadership Conference in Seattle 1999. "The Intranet is based on Microsoft's own company-wide system. Development involved thorough knowledge management processes as well as creating a portal for web-based work functions," he said. "Now former manual processes, such as leave applications, are web-based. What's more, the Intranet provides easy communication within the department, between schools and administrative offices. A lot of layers have been removed."

The web site and forms were developed using IIS/ASP Technology and FrontPage 2000, enhanced by Internet Explore 4.0. The EduMail Microsoft Exchange-based messaging infrastructure provides deet@work applications with access to messaging functionality such as Workflow. A key to the success of the system is the Exchange Global Address Book in conjunction with SQL Server, which provides an accurate and dynamic staff directory containing over 56,000 user addresses.

Empowering staff through the use of technology

For a number of years the department has engaged in longitudinal research to gauge the effects of professional development on the use of technology in learning programs. It was this research that led to the Notebooks for Teachers initiative. "We found that a lack of access to technology was a major barrier to many teachers becoming effective users of technology in a learning context," Doherty said. "Now that they have their own computer they are more at ease with technology – it is more useable."

wanted to further enhance this infrastructure to eliminate paperwork & unnecessary administrative steps in document processing, developing a world-class intranet that services the needs of 526,000 school students, 1637 schools and 54,500 staff.

The introduction of deet@work represented another major change in the culture of the department, which required rapid adoption and acceptance from the state's teachers and administration workers, whose average age was 45 years. Yet Doherty believes the change has been positive, thanks to the department's concerted effort to help people be comfortable and see the benefits for themselves. The next round of longitudinal studies will present the opportunity to measure this perception.

Ensuring success with a Microsoft Certified Partner

deet@work is a reality because of the integration of a raft of Microsoft technologies and systems, applied to DEET's unique requirements. This was further strengthened not only through leveraging DEET and Microsoft expertise, but the support of third-party partners, Melbourne-based boutique solutions provider OBS.

Brian Cook, OBS senior consultant, represents the company that developed the portal providing access from the entire DEET user community to a host of back-office applications and business processes. OBS was also instrumental in developing the mind-boggling corporate directory. He commented on the importance of Exchange to the solution. "No other solution could have handled such an extensive directory linking so many users across 2000 distinct locations, regardless of their email account software. Microsoft Exchange has also provided the ability for DEET to easily interface with other Victorian government departments who may be using other messaging systems, appearing transparently as a user on their system without difficulty."

Setting the Standard

Mr. Peter Allen is secretary of DEET, but in a non-government context would be known as CEO. He has always been a great believer in the value of technology in delivering world-class education services and enhancing learning outcomes – a philosophy shared by Microsoft. In April 2000 Allen attended the Government Leaders Conference in Seattle where he presented an update on the Department's vision for its massive state-wide system, highlighting the enormous impact of the Microsoft-based deet@work Intranet. That story in conjunction with the fact that Victorian schools boast sophisticated LAN and WAN connections, videoconferencing and access to digital satellite communication, cement DEET's position as a technology pioneer, setting the standard for other government and private organisations.

Partner Details

OBS

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Benefits

Transforming the business

Doherty is unambiguous about the benefits the Intranet has provided for the department as a whole. "We have experienced tremendous savings in time and money. Communication between schools and the department is now totally electronic and this had saved us money in publishing, printing and distribution for a start. Web-based processes are timelier than paper-based systems; the benefits of direct entry, immediate access and the ability to share information mean that business is conducted in a more productive way, with greater integrity." According to a document produced by Doherty's department, the business imperatives driving the development of the ambitious Intranet project were to create an organisational 'coal face' that would contribute towards making DEET a paperless office.

As well as automating business processes and disseminating information, deet@work was seen as the vehicle by which a collaborative culture could be facilitated through the redeployment of traditional client/server solutions to the Intranet. Doherty explained, "we are now getting the most out of our investment in underlying Microsoft technology because the Intranet provides a multi-directional link between back and 'front-office' applications, connecting school desktops to the department's core processing power with a single entry point."

The Future

According to Brian Dempsey, from Microsoft Australia's Enterprise Group, "DEET is an example of a very progressive organisation. With a clear vision they have achieved amazing results quickly and have proven the value of a strong alliance with a major vendor. Education is a key area for Microsoft and we are proud to have been able to share DEET's vision to develop education and learning outcomes through sophisticated technology integration."

Doherty commented, "integral to our ability to provide this service has been our unique partnership with Microsoft Australia. This relationship has been a major driver in our success in achieving our aims so far and in developing strategies to maintain the right direction. Without doubt, our schools have been the biggest winners in this process and that is what we are all about."

Benefits

The intranet solution has brought about a number of immediate and cross organisation benefits. These include reduced time in developing and publishing intranet content, as well as lower printing costs, which have resulted in more timely and better informed decisions made in a more collaborative culture

Microsoft Technology

- Exchange Server 5.5
- SQL Server
- IIS Server
- FrontPage 2000
- Internet Explorer



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