

Reno, City of

Collaboration Solution Empowers the City of Reno to Manage by Objective

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Solution Overview

Company

Reno, City of

Partner(s)

CorasWorks

Customer Profile

The communications and technology group for the City of Reno, Nevada maintains the IT infrastructure that supports 1,500 PC users located at 27 locations throughout the city.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Office Outlook 2003
- Microsoft Office Professional Edition 2003
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Enterprise Edition
- Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services

Business Situation

The city's employees needed to improve their effectiveness to meet the goals of the city's new management by objective initiative. However, they lacked the tools necessary to accomplish this.

Third Party Software

CorasWorks Project Workplace 2

Vertical Industries

Government - Regional / State

Solution Description

The City of Reno chose Microsoft® Windows® SharePoint® Services to improve its collaborative capabilities and Project Workplace 2.5 add-ons from CorasWorks.

Country/Region

United States

Benefits

- Information workers and other employees work more efficiently and productively.
- Agency managers now meet objectives on time and on budget.
- Quick to deploy, easy-to-use solution provides high value at low cost.



The City of Reno's Communications and Technology group adopted a collaboration and project management platform based on Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services and the CorasWorks Project Workplace 2.5 suite of project management add-ons. The solution enables users without specialized project management training to manage complex projects more efficiently and meet the city's new management by objective standards. As a result:

- ***The city council now has near real-time visibility into all city-wide projects.***
- ***The IT department reduced the city's risk of adopting new technology.***
- ***The IT department has realized lower cost of ownership for the city's collaboration infrastructure.***

Situation

Like most successful organizations, the City of Reno had been searching for new ways to improve its level and range of services. To achieve this objective, Charles McNeally, the City of Reno's new city manager, established an innovative management by objectives approach, in which city-wide goals are achieved by implementing standards that integrate the collaborative efforts of various municipal agencies.

The city's management by objectives initiative involves a collaborative process in which the city council and the managers of each city agency establish annual performance goals. Meeting these objectives requires a standard method for agencies to track their progress and city council members can gain visibility into the status of any project. To achieve their goals, the city needed a solution that could:

- Identify key tasks and deliverables that enable city agencies to achieve their objectives.
- Organize, summarize, and share information in ways that made it immediately accessible and useful to different levels of city managers.

In the previous system, city workers lacked the management and reporting tools they needed to implement and support effective collaboration. Formal collaboration was limited to documents attached to e-mails, face-to-face-meetings, and sharing documents that had been posted on network file shares. None of these methods proved very effective in ensuring that projects were delivered on time and on budget, nor did they provide the insight into the city's vast number of projects that was needed by management and the city council.

Rick Vandenberg, Director of Communications and Technology at the City of Reno explains, "Very early in the assessment process, several facts became clear. Conventional file shares and e-mail were not adequate to meet our collaboration needs. Traditional project management software could not help us implement our management initiative successfully. And, conventional measurements of time and cost savings were less important than easy-to-use tools that enabled us to more readily achieve our objectives. We needed an easy-to-implement and easy-to-use collaboration system that enabled multiple people from multiple agencies in different geographic locations to interact with each other easily. We also needed to track each project, no matter how quickly events changed. And, we needed a simple project management system that could be used by managers whose skills did not necessarily include project management, so that everyone could easily incorporate project management into their own daily routine."

Solution

Vandenberg identified that Microsoft® Windows® SharePoint® Services, the new Web-based team workspace that is an integral component of the Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003 operating system, would be an ideal online collaboration solution that was easy to implement, easy to use, and easy to extend. Equally important, Windows SharePoint Services could serve as a platform for deploying Project Workplace 2.5, a set of modular Web service add-on components. Project Workplace was developed by CorasWorks, a Microsoft Partner that specializes in Windows SharePoint Services-based project management solutions. Project Workplace enabled city workers who were not professional project managers to track projects and manage their staff and deliverables more effectively, by incorporating essential project management functionality into the Web-based collaborative SharePoint environment.

In September 2003, the communications and technology group deployed a pilot project management program using Windows SharePoint Services and CorasWorks Project Workplace 2.5. To provide an IT environment that could support the solution, and the 1,500 PC users who would use it, the group also implemented an upgrade to the city's network operating system from Microsoft Windows 2000 Server to Windows Server 2003.

Microsoft technologies that provided the foundation for the solution include:

- Microsoft Windows Server 2003 provides the secure, stable platform and infrastructure services that the City of Reno needed to manage and support complex city-wide projects. Windows Server

- 2003 also delivered valuable improvements to a broad range of file and print services that are expected to add additional value as they are incrementally deployed.
- Windows SharePoint Services provides a Web-based team workspace for document management and a rich set of communication and collaboration features that enable virtual teams to collaborate and communicate more effectively.

By using the wide range of Windows SharePoint Services tools, services, and best practices, the City of Reno communications and technology group was able to easily set up standardized project management services for Windows SharePoint-based teams located in any agency anywhere in the city.

Vandenberg continues, "Windows SharePoint Services provides an efficient collaboration platform on which we could add the CorasWorks Workplace project management tools. Together, they provide a cost-effective solution that enables workers who are not project managers by profession to track progress and ensure that they meet their goals."

The CorasWorks Project Workplace 2.5 suite of modular add-ons extends Windows SharePoint Services technology by adding project management-oriented services and capabilities to the standard out-of-the-box collaboration capabilities of Windows SharePoint Services.

William Rogers, President of CorasWorks, says, "The modular design of the Project Workplace 2.5 suite vastly reduces the costs, risk, and time to create and deploy an effective collaboration-based project management solution. Companies often need to customize a collaboration platform to get a solution that is right for their environment. When customers buy Project Workplace 2.5 modules or the entire suite, they might not get every bell and whistle provided by a customized solution. But they get most of what they need in a cost-effective package that they can install and start using in less than a week. They buy it, plug it in, and get immediate value. That's what I call a successful solution."

The solution has helped the city increase productivity and lower costs across a complex portfolio of projects by improving visibility, accountability, and responsiveness.

The communications and technology group has planned a full deployment to the rest of the city's 1,500 PC users during 2004.

Benefits

The collaborative project management solution based on Windows SharePoint Services and CorasWorks Workplace 2.5 provided project participants with a rich user experience that delivered advanced Web-based collaboration and project management capabilities. At the same time, it enabled the IT staff to provide a cost-effective, secure, structured IT environment for users throughout the city that could be easily extended as needed.

With Transparent Project Execution, City Workers Focus on Public Service

Before the introduction of the Windows SharePoint Services-based solution, city employees conducted projects by exchanging project files—mostly Microsoft Office Word 2003 documents and Microsoft Office Excel 2003 spreadsheets—through network file shares, e-mail messages, and in-person multi-agency meetings.

Updating project information required repeated data transfers from a network file share reserved for personal files to public file shares, which served as the centralized data repository. This system was inherently insecure in that it did not allow for effective document management, such as version control or retirement of older documents. Moreover, it was a particularly ineffective way to collaborate on shared documents. Another barrier to efficient project management was that the information on the servers could not be readily organized for analysis and review, nor could it be easily and quickly assembled into summaries for review by different levels of managers.

“ The beauty of Windows Server 2003 and the Microsoft .NET Framework is that we know that any modular add-on we develop in the .NET environment will work with Windows SharePoint Services seamlessly and immediately, without anyone having to make changes to the platform. ”

William Rogers
President, CorasWorks

After the deployment, when City of Reno users enter a SharePoint Services team site enhanced with CorasWorks Project Workplace add-ons, they encounter the standard SharePoint Services user interface, tools, and capabilities. The familiar Microsoft desktop-like environment enables users to work on shared documents more readily and to manage them more effectively and securely. Team members can easily see who has checked out a document for review. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and visible for all to see. Document archiving and retrieval is easy, too, thanks to the built-in search capabilities of Windows SharePoint Services.

Christopher Good, Webmaster and manager of the SharePoint Services-based team sites for the City of Reno, describes the consensus of early adopters of the solution, saying, "Most project participants are information workers, not project managers. Windows SharePoint Services and CorasWorks provide us with true project management capabilities. A quick hour of training is all that even new SharePoint users need. After that, we can all get back to what we do best—serving the citizens of Reno. Now we can complete our work and achieve our objectives more quickly and easily."

Out-of-the-Box Functionality Speeds Deployment and Lowers Operational Costs

Each workday, the city's IT group supports more than 57 multi-user applications stored in more than 1,000 PCs located at 27 locations throughout the city. Richard Vandenberg supervises a 22-member staff that maintains and controls the content of databases, manages the IT infrastructure, and keeps software components up-to-date.

The city's IT staff focuses on providing the city's 1,500 PC users with a secure, consistent network environment. Before deploying the solution, this goal was hampered by accidental deletions of documents in network file shares, unauthorized changes to templates and other important documents, and a tepid response to city-wide e-mail messages notifying employees of problems and corrective actions.

Deploying the Windows SharePoint Services-based solution quickly eliminated many of these problems. The out-of-the box functionality of Windows SharePoint Services enabled easy deployment and management of fundamental collaborative capabilities for the IT staff. Upon deployment of the collaboration infrastructure, local teams are empowered to set up their own sites as needed and manage them on a day-to-day basis, thereby limiting the need for IT support or management. This approach empowers local teams and helps to reduce IT operations costs.

It is easy for a team-based site administrator to prevent unauthorized changes to templates and other important documents by assigning privileges for who can create, read, and change each file. Routing project-related messages through team sites rather than broadcasting them on the city intranet creates a sense of community that increases readership and acceptance of project information.

Secure, Structured Collaboration-based Project Management

CorasWorks Project Workplace 2.5 project management add-ons enable the IT staff to deliver a structured and consistent project management environment that has already helped the city stay focused on its management by objective initiative. Team sites throughout the city's intranet now use the same user interface, navigation aids, tools, customized site structure, and processes to reflect the requirements of city agencies. Because all users are in effect managers of their own personal projects that are part of team, department, and agency deliverables, the use of a consistent structure for project management has helped improve personal and team efficiency and productivity. This improvement, in turn, has helped all agencies meet their objectives more readily.

And there are even more advantages to the solution that will be realized. Rogers continues, "The beauty of Windows Server 2003 and the Microsoft .NET Framework is that we know that any modular add-on we develop in the .NET environment will work with Windows SharePoint Services seamlessly and immediately, without anyone having to make changes to the platform."

Richard Vandenberg concludes, "Our solution based on Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services and CorasWorks Workplace succeeds because it provides IT professionals, information workers, and project managers with a flexible set of tools that make it easier to set up, implement, monitor, and support multiple projects in agencies throughout the city. It also provides a Web-based collaboration environment where all city workers can work together securely and productively, enabling them to more efficiently accomplish the goals set by the city council."

Windows Server 2003

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For more information about CorasWorks products and services, call (703) 748-2736 or visit the Web site at: www.corasworks.net/

For more information about City of Reno products and services, visit the Web site at: www.cityofreno.com/

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Press contact: rrt@wagged.com
Global Principal