

Microsoft Case Study

Department of Defense Sponsors Collaborative Work Portal for Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration R&D Program

An Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration (ACTD) team within the Department of Defense needed to improve collaboration and communication among thirteen diverse, geographically scattered organizations within the military, government, and private sector. The team turned to Portal Dynamics, a Microsoft Certified Partner, for help. Portal Dynamics rapidly deployed a solution based on Microsoft SharePoint Products and Technologies, Microsoft Exchange Server 2003, the Microsoft Office System, including Microsoft Office Live Meeting, and other Microsoft technologies. With familiar, pervasive Microsoft productivity tools, the solution provided immediate benefits, including a 20% reduction in operating expenses, allowing the DoD to efficiently discover new battlefield technologies.

Situation

- The Department of Defense (DoD) is always looking to improve logistics on the battlefield. For example, the JP8 Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration (ACTD) is a DoD-sponsored program to develop a synthetic "single battlefield fuel" for the military's ground equipment and aircraft. As is typical for an ACTD project, the pace is fast, typically 2-4 years from idea to concept demonstration.
- The JP8 research team faces difficult challenges. Teammates work in a number of geographically dispersed organizations, including Washington, DC, Michigan, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Maine, and the UK. With diverse work teams spread across the world, DoD leaders realized a need to make the team more productive. Coryne Forest, Program Manager at the Army's Tank and Automotive Command (TACOM), describes the need this way: "We needed a portal to improve our communication and collaboration, so that we could not only work faster, but smarter. And, we needed a solution that fit well with what we already have—the Microsoft® Office System, Live Meeting, and other Microsoft products."
- A number of specific needs were clear. Secure communication and collaboration among military services, government agencies, and private sectors companies was difficult at best. Teamwork was also hampered by traditional technical and cultural barriers. Jim Clautice, Senior Implementation Manager at Portal Dynamics, a Microsoft partner selected to help the DoD develop an integrated digital environment (IDE), describes a typical scenario: "Literally, e-mails were going around sharing documents. The teams did not have public folders they could save to. Getting through the firewalls and security of different installations was very difficult."
- The JP8 team clearly needed better communication and collaboration tools allowing them to make faster and more informed research decisions. Both decision makers and researchers wanted easy access to current, relevant material on their own schedules. They set the following specific objectives:
 - Reduce time required to find and access shared project information by at least 25 percent.
 - Reduce decision making by at least 30 percent.

- Reduce travel costs by 20 percent.
- Reduce document production cycle time 30 percent.
- The desired results of these efficiency improvements: faster innovation, shorter R&D and product development cycles, lower cost of operations, and "best practices" sharing among the ACTD work groups. In short, the team wanted a more connected organization that could efficiently develop and apply new battlefield technologies.

Solution

- Portal Dynamics quickly set about designing and implementing a web-based portal solution for the JP8 team. The foundation of Portal Dynamics' product services is PM-Portal—an open architecture solution based on Microsoft® SharePoint™ Products and Technologies and other Microsoft solutions that provide a collaborative work environment for managing total product life cycle support.
- Specific features of the portal solution were particularly well-suited to provide value for the DoD team. These included:
 - Easy to use and secure environment
 - Ease and speed of initial configuration
 - Integration with existing Microsoft solutions
 - Ability to manage and post content without requiring external IT resources
- For the ACTD team, having access to the portal anytime, anywhere has resulted in a dramatic improvement in their efficiency and effectiveness. On a daily basis, Coryne Forest of the Tank and Automotive Command (TACOM) is quickly able to access the portal, and easily find the information she's looking for. When she wants to collaborate with a teammate half way around the world on a document, she simply accesses the functionality of Microsoft® Office Live Meeting and is able to view the same information her teammate is viewing via the web. And because the portal is integrated with other Microsoft tools, the team can access and use them during the meeting – without having to call the IT folks for support!

Benefits

- When the Office of the Secretary of Defense initially sponsored the JP8 communication and collaboration project, leaders viewed it as an experiment ("an ACTD within another ACTD") to explore the effectiveness of an integrated digital environment for managing less structured, early stage R&D projects. According to the feedback thus far, the response has been resoundingly positive. By empowering JP8 team members with familiar Microsoft productivity tools, the upgraded portal immediately provided important benefits including:
 - Secure, fully search-enabled access to shared documents. Researchers and managers can now find the information they need, quickly and on their own schedule. As a result, decision making time has been reduced by more than 20%.
 - More efficient collaboration on documents, presentations, status reports, and other program materials. Central document handling tools make authoring, reviewing, and publishing documents much easier. The typical document life cycle has been reduced by

20%. Duplicated work has been substantially reduced through improved search capabilities and document management tools.

- Interactive, web-enabled group discussions and team meetings are now possible using Microsoft Live Meeting. Face-to-face meetings involving the entire team have been reduced from one per quarter to one or two a year.
- Not only has this benefited the program's budget, but the team members have also seen an improvement in their quality of life due to fewer trips and less time spent away from family and friends. The result: more satisfied employees and travel costs reduced by at least 30%.
- Face-to-face meetings involving the entire team have been reduced from one per quarter to one or two a year. Not only has this benefited the program's budget, but the team members have also seen an improvement in their quality of life due to fewer trips and less time spent away from family and friends. The result: more satisfied employees and travel costs reduced by at least 30%.
- The comprehensive communication and collaboration solution based on SharePoint Products and Technologies is changing the very culture of how to conduct R&D in the nation's defense establishment. Specifically, the JP8 program is producing a higher quality result up to 20% more quickly, because team members across the globe now share information and are able to capture and duplicate best practices. Coryne Foster summarizes the team's opinion of the new portal succinctly: "We wanted low cost, ease of use, integration with the Microsoft Office System, and the ability to set up a portal in a couple of weeks. Portal Dynamics and Microsoft have helped us achieve that goal."
- News of these benefits may soon lead to fundamental changes in the way advanced R&D is done by the Defense Department and their contractors. Dr. Ted Barna concludes: "We (DoD) see this new communication and collaboration tool as a pilot to evaluate how the portal concept would work for advanced concepts research. If the success of this project is any guide, we will soon start using these portal based solutions in numerous other programs, greatly benefiting both the Department and the public."

For More Information

- For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: <http://www.microsoft.com/>
- To contact Portal Dynamics call: 703-778-3500 or visit: www.portal-dynamics.com

© 2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. This case study is for informational purposes only. MICROSOFT MAKES NO WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, IN THIS SUMMARY. Microsoft, SharePoint, and Windows are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. The names of actual companies and products mentioned herein may be the trademarks of their respective owners.