



## U.S. Army Deploys E-Business Portal to Accelerate Global Collaboration, Improve Military Readiness, and Reduce Costs

### Overview

**Country/Region:** United States  
**Industry:** U.S. Government Agency

### Customer Profile

Based at the U.S Army Garrison in Warren, Michigan, Program Executive Office Ground Combat Systems (PEO GCS) is one of the Army's largest PEOs with a global workforce of over 700 employees.

### Business Situation

PEO GCS needed to achieve higher productivity and lower cost by replacing paper-based communication and program management systems with Integrated Digital Environments (IDEs).

### Solution

PEO GCS migrated to Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Portal Server 2003 and Microsoft Windows® SharePoint Services to provide an e-business portal and collaborative workspaces for its worldwide workforce.

### Benefits

- Secure remote access
- Less than one-hour user training
- Employees save 30 minutes daily
- Lower investment
- Positive return on investment (ROI)

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Donald P. Papke, Assistant Program Executive Officer, Ground Combat Systems, Corporate Information

To enhance mission readiness, tighten integration of command structures, and lower operational costs, Program Executive Office Ground Combat Systems (PEO GCS) and Microsoft® Partner Portal Dynamics deployed an enterprise e-business portal with Microsoft SharePoint® Portal Server 2001. Building on the success of this effort, PEO GCS migrated to Microsoft Office SharePoint Portal Server 2003 and deployed other Microsoft technologies, including Microsoft Windows® SharePoint Services and the Microsoft Office System. The portal provides enhanced functionality with 70 percent lower investment than typical competing solutions. Benefits include a high adoption rate, minimal retraining costs, secure remote access, streamlined information search, increased team productivity through shared workspaces and advanced document management tools, and a positive return on investment (ROI) in less than one year.



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## Situation

The U.S. Army is the oldest and largest military service branch, established in 1775 to meet the demands of the Revolutionary War. Today the Army has nearly 700,000 soldiers on active duty. In 2000, the Army embarked on a program to deploy Integrated Digital Environments (IDEs)—electronic workspaces and procedures to replace paper-based processes. IDEs will eventually be used to manage virtually all Army operations: weapons program management, procurement, battlefield logistics, and personnel administration. A related Army initiative called Advanced Collaborative Environments (ACE) mandates computer-based tools to help leaders make faster, more informed decisions through access to shared information. The IDE and ACE concepts are consistent with broader Army objectives: higher speed, more flexibility, enhanced mission readiness, and lower cost for systems development and support.

Program Executive Office Ground Combat Systems (PEO GCS) is one of the largest PEOs within the Army's Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology Pillar. PEO GCS serves as the systems integrator responsible for design, deployment, and support of wheeled and tracked vehicles including tanks, the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, armored personnel carriers, and next-generation Unmanned Ground Vehicles. Don Papke is the Assistant Program Executive Officer, Corporate Information, for PEO GCS at the U.S. Army Garrison in Warren, Michigan. "My job is equivalent to a Chief Information Officer in the private sector," says Papke. His organization faced several urgent business needs. "The organization is becoming a decentralized, global workforce. Our personnel constantly travel. They work from home, office, remote sites—wherever they can. We needed to provide our workforce with tools to be more productive when working remotely."

In addition to improving remote access, PEO GCS needed to address workflow bottlenecks in its project management system. Program tasks were assigned and tracked primarily through e-mail. Managers opened their "Sent" box to review who had responsibility for a task, and when they had initiated the request. This approach had inherent flaws: team members' e-mail folders were not uniformly organized, and critical messages could be corrupted or deleted.

PEO GCS planned to deploy a new IDE for programs within its own PEO, but Papke and his team also wanted to impact other PEOs within the Acquisition Pillar. The team developed a needs priority list for the portal:

- Provide secure remote access to shared information and collaborative workspaces
- Simplify workspaces through single sign-on and role-based access to e-mail and applications
- Improve decision support by providing decision makers with a "digital dashboard," including workflow, task tracking, and project deliverables
- Present actionable, consolidated information from legacy applications

## Solution

For assistance, PEO GCS turned to Microsoft Partner Portal Dynamics, a company specializing in collaborative information and knowledge solutions to support product and process life-cycle decision making. Headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, with an office in Warren, Michigan, Portal Dynamics had a successful track record with other Department of Defense (DoD) efforts, including a program development portal for the U.S. Marine Corps's Light Armored Vehicle (LAV) Program and a collaboration portal for DoD's Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration Research and Development (R&D) Program. Mary Mancini,

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Project Manager for Portal Dynamics, was the on-site program manager for the LAV portal at the Warren, Michigan, site. Mancini quickly seized the opportunity to incorporate previous work, organizing a small team to review Papke’s needs. She was optimistic about a path forward, saying: “We were confident that a phased approach, using portal technologies we had successfully deployed in other programs, would meet PEO GCS needs.”

#### **Portal Selection and Deployment**

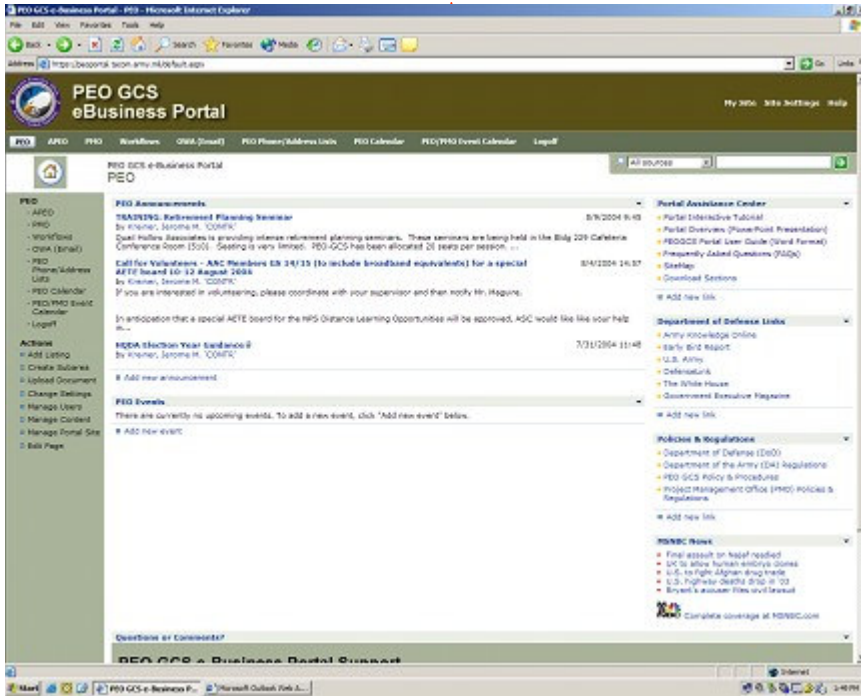
In 2003, PEO GCS deployed Phase 1 of an enterprise portal with Microsoft® SharePoint® Portal Server 2001. The choice for Microsoft was straightforward, according to Don Papke. “We considered offerings from IBM and other vendors as well as SharePoint Portal Server,” he says, “When we compared functionality and cost, Microsoft was the clear winner.”

A team of specialists—five from Portal Dynamics and five from PEO GCS—deployed Phase 1. The team faced some technical and cultural challenges, but persevered. “This was ‘bleeding edge’ technology for the Army,” says Papke, “We had to lay a foundation for Microsoft SharePoint [Products and Technologies] within very strict ground rules that we were given.” SharePoint Portal Server 2001 targeted a select group of individuals representing different classes of end users. Using Microsoft development tools including the Microsoft .NET Framework, the DoD/Portal Dynamics team developed specialized business process workflows and other applications that integrated with the portal. The .NET Framework is an integral component of Microsoft Windows® operating system that provides a programming model and runtime for Web services, Web applications, and smart client applications.

#### **Migration to Microsoft Office SharePoint Portal Server 2003**

After four months of testing and refinement, the team was ready to evaluate Microsoft Office SharePoint Portal Server 2003 and develop a PEO-wide migration and deployment plan. By that time, the Army had adopted the Microsoft Office System, Microsoft Windows® desktop and server systems, and supporting Microsoft technologies as standards through a separate Enterprise Agreement. Tight integration between Office SharePoint Portal Server 2003 and Microsoft Office System applications also offered a clear incentive for continuing with the Microsoft solution. The team moved quickly when it realized that SharePoint Products and Technologies fit in perfectly with the Army’s plans. Papke says, “When we saw the enhanced capabilities—ease of use, customizability, security, and integration with the Microsoft Office System—we decided to migrate immediately to SharePoint Portal Server 2003. We then went into production across the entire PEO.” In addition to SharePoint Portal Server 2003, the solution consists of Microsoft server and desktop technologies, including Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003 operating system with Windows SharePoint Services and the Microsoft Office System.

As the project moves into Phase 2 with SharePoint Portal Server 2003, the team is creating new functionalities and expanding the portal to other PEO programs. Many DoD personnel and contractors use the portal daily to manage their work. Usage is expected to increase sharply as the portal is rolled out to other organizations in the PEO. Other Army PEOs have also expressed an interest in learning more about what PEO GCS is doing with the SharePoint tools in order to improve their collaboration and life-cycle management capabilities.



The GCS Portal delivers secure, role-based project information to team members and provides quick links to shared workspaces and applications.

“Because the portal-based work environment is always available, it can adapt better to people’s personal schedules. As a result, we have increased both productivity and worker satisfaction.”

Jim O’Farrell, Director of Marketing and Business Development, Portal Dynamics

**Secure Access and Collaboration**

The PEO GCS portal enables team members to access information they need, from any location at any time. The portal authenticates and recognizes the individual’s job role (the PEO is migrating to Active Directory® service, part of Windows Server 2003, for these features). After successful log on, the portal delivers a customized home page that displays only information the individual is authorized to receive. Known as “audience targeting,” this feature enhances security and sharply cuts information overload. Workers get a quick overview of relevant news, task status, and leaders’ calendars. “People don’t get bogged down by an enormous portal,” explains Papke. “They can get to their authorized environment quickly without having to navigate through other information that is not relevant to them.”

Once logged on, an employee can access e-mail and immediately begin working in a collaborative environment. Shared document

libraries (available under Windows SharePoint Services, a feature of Windows Server 2003) provide a common repository for all team documents, eliminating the need for multiple copies to exist on individual workstations. Individuals can check out, edit, and check in a document, ensuring that no one else is editing that document simultaneously. Detailed revision history and versioning allows managers to check who has opened or modified a file.

As the PEO migrates to Microsoft Office System, these features will be enhanced and easier to use. For instance, documents can be opened or saved to a shared library directly from within Microsoft Office 2003 applications rather than requiring navigation to the library through Windows Explorer. In Microsoft Outlook® 2003, sending an attachment to multiple recipients enables creation of a shared workspace—automatically adding the recipients as authorized users.

**Data Consolidation**

PEO GCS project leaders need a way to display program information from many information sources. In the past, this required tedious manual compilation and reporting of data. A project manager would access readiness data from one source, logistics from another, and cost versus budget from still another—then create a report by consolidating the information manually. The PEO GCS portal will streamline this process by establishing integrated links to the data systems that can automatically access and render the aggregated information in a customizable Web Part. (A Web Part is a reusable component in the portal used to display specific information on a Web site.) The result is a personalized “digital dashboard,” a decision support tool that helps managers by relieving them of time-consuming data access tasks and helps them concentrate on program management.

“The PEO GCS Portal will result in more accurate, timely, and relevant data to the Army leadership and soldiers in the field.”

Donald P. Papke, Assistant Program Executive Officer, Ground Combat Systems, Corporate Information

## **Benefits**

Since deploying SharePoint Portal Server 2003, PEO GCS has realized a number of specific benefits:

### ***High Adoption Rate, Minimal Training***

PEO GCS employees enthusiastically adopted the new portal. Access is straightforward, and the home page look and feel is user friendly. “People are excited about using the portal,” says Papke, “They find it very easy to become familiar with the environment.” Because the user interface is so intuitive, training costs are minimal. Eighty percent of the workers use the portal productively after only a one-hour session with online training modules.

### ***Increased Productivity, Worker Satisfaction***

The portal provides a reliable and secure access point for DoD and contract workers, whether at the office or a remote location. According to Don Papke, the value of this new capability cannot be overstated. He explains, “We simply had no workable remote access before, so this is a step change improvement for us.” With a mobile workforce, employees frequently log on after traditional work hours. Jim O’Farrell, Director of Marketing and Business Development for Portal Dynamics, explains the value, “Because the portal-based work environment is always available, it can adapt better to people’s personal schedules. As a result, we have increased both productivity and worker satisfaction.”

### ***Audience Targeting Reduces Time to Find Critical Data***

By consolidating all the key information an employee needs in a single, cohesive view, time required to find data has been reduced to an average of 30 minutes daily per employee. That time can be spent on more value-adding activities.

### ***Improved Business Process Workflow***

The improved workflow program—integrated with the portal—streamlines progress tracking for project managers. The application can track assignments on many different programs simultaneously and creates daily or weekly summary reports as part of a manager’s digital dashboard. “The workflow application has been a big hit with project managers. We expect it to be adopted throughout the PEO,” reports Mary Mancini. “Being part of the portal, it is easy to use, accurate, and saves them a lot of time.”

### ***A High-Value Solution***

The Microsoft portal enabled Papke’s team to deliver strong business value on time and under budget. “Even though we are in the public sector, in this era of shrinking budgets we carefully watch the bottom line,” says Don Papke. “We have to show a good return on investment.” By utilizing technologies and making a sound investment, the payback has been quick. Cost avoidance alone has paid for the PEO GCS portal in the first year.

The PEO GCS portal is a strong example of smart technology investment. Other e-business solutions had been launched in the organization. While providing some value, they were proving complex and expensive to deploy. PEO leaders were so impressed with the GCS portal they quickly shifted their resources to Microsoft technology. “With the value we delivered—performance versus cost—we didn’t have to sell the Microsoft SharePoint Portal Server solution. It essentially sold itself,” says Papke.

### ***Advancing Tomorrow’s Army with Microsoft Technologies***

As the project moves into Phase 2, PEO GCS is expanding the portal’s value beyond traditional business functions by incorporating and streamlining legacy information and by adopting emerging technologies. These steps will provide a

## For More Information

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For more information about Portal Dynamics products and services, call (703) 778-3500 or visit the Web site at [www.portal-dynamics.com](http://www.portal-dynamics.com)

For more information about the U.S. Army, call (800) 872-2769 or visit the Web site at: [www.army.mil](http://www.army.mil)

centralized and cohesive view of fleet readiness, maintenance, configuration management, or cost/schedule information. Papke concludes, "With Microsoft Portal Server 2003 and Windows SharePoint Services, we've created a very productive environment. The PEO GCS portal will result in more accurate, timely, and relevant data to the Army leadership and soldiers in the field."

## Microsoft Office System

Microsoft Office System is the business world's chosen environment for information work that provides the software, servers, and services that help you succeed by transforming information into impact. For more information about Microsoft Office System, go to: [www.microsoft.com/office](http://www.microsoft.com/office)

## Microsoft SharePoint Products and Technologies

SharePoint Portal Server 2003 enables enterprises to deploy an intelligent portal that seamlessly connects users, teams, and knowledge so that people can leverage relevant information across business processes to help them work more efficiently. Windows SharePoint Services allows teams to create Web sites for information sharing and document collaboration, benefits that help increase individual and team productivity. For more information about Microsoft SharePoint Products and Technologies, go to: [www.microsoft.com/sharepoint](http://www.microsoft.com/sharepoint)

## Software and Services

- Products
  - Microsoft Office 2003 Professional
  - Microsoft Office XP Professional
  - Microsoft Office SharePoint Portal Server 2003
  - Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Enterprise Edition
  - Microsoft Windows XP Professional
  - Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000
- Technologies
  - Microsoft .NET Framework

- Microsoft Active Directory
- Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services

## Partners

- Portal Dynamics, Inc.

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