

Case Study

GLOBAL ENGINEERING GROUP

INDUSTRY

- ▶ Aerospace, defence and energy

DEPARTMENT

- ▶ Product development

SOLUTION COMPONENTS

- ▶ Microsoft Project Online
- ▶ Microsoft PowerBI
- ▶ TPG PSLink (SAP Integration)



At least 800 hours of time savings per year (at 1 of 36 sites alone) due to new Project Online solution

CHALLENGES IN PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

With its 36 development sites using a patchwork of different project and resource planning tools, The Customer had insufficient visibility into project costs, schedules and resource demands. This caused delays and a lack of accuracy in predicting delivery dates for customers. It also made resource capacity planning difficult and time-consuming.

To minimize disruption and ensure as high a level of acceptance as possible, the Customer team worked with TPG The Project Group to phase in an enterprise-wide project management system for its development sites.

Starting with three pilot sites, the results in terms of time savings and increased efficiency were so dramatic that multiple other sites, project teams and departments requested a trial of the system too.

Based on Microsoft Project Online, the solution is running in over a third of the total sites. As an example of the benefits to the business, one site reports time savings of at least 16 hours a week for their resource planning and reporting activities.



GLOBALLY ACTIVE ENGINEERING GROUP

The Customer is a global engineering group specialising in smart engineering of systems and sub-systems for extreme environments within the aerospace, defence and energy markets.

Some 11,000 people are employed across facilities in Asia, Europe and North America and regional bases in Brazil, India and the Middle East.



IMPETUS FOR ENTERPRISE-WIDE SYSTEM

The Customer's 36 engineering development sites were regularly asked by the divisional and group leadership to estimate costs, schedules and resources required for the projects they were managing.

With each site using a variety of project planning tools, such as Excel and standalone Microsoft Project, consolidating and analysing this information on a business unit basis was complex and time-consuming.

A further issue was that the information provided by the teams lacked sufficient detail.

"We needed to be confident that the decisions we made were the right ones – based on reliable insight – and ensure we were giving reliable project delivery dates to customers," comments the engineering director at The Customer.

"You need to get the first few users on board and benefiting from the system quickly."

PILOT SYSTEMS AT THREE SITES

Working with specialists from TPG, the Customer team initiated a pilot at three sites. At first, they limited usage of the system to assigning tasks, reporting on project health, and resource capacity planning.

"The TPG team was really helpful at this critical stage," notes the engineering director. "You need to get the first few users on board and benefiting from the system quickly – TPG is very experienced in ways to do this, as well as in the technical and functional aspects of the system."

Feedback from users at the pilot sites was positive about the new application and processes from the start, which helped "market" it to other sites.

Once the three pilot sites extended their use of the solution to include Project Online, it generated a significant wave of enthusiasm. "Things really took off once Project Online was deployed," says the engineering director.

"Nine other sites contacted us to ask if they could test the system once they had seen the benefits among their colleagues at the pilot sites – and we're seeing more interest every week. We've gone from a handful of users to over 400," he adds.



“Once we upgraded to Project Online along with PowerBI, things got even better. Now, each project manager saves as much as two hours a week per report.”



SHORT PROJECT PROFILE

The Company: The Customer is a global engineering group specialising in smart engineering of systems and sub-systems for extreme environments within the aerospace, defence and energy markets.

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The Challenge: The Customer’s 36 development sites were using a variety of standalone tools and solutions to plan and manage projects. If a program manager wanted to know how their projects were progressing, he or she had to ask each project manager in turn and then produce a report on the program as a whole.

This led to inaccurate budgeting, scheduling and forecasting; time-consuming and complex reporting processes; a lack of visibility into resource demands; and occasional budget overruns.

The Solution: The initial project management solution, piloted at three of its 36 development units, was based on Microsoft Project Server and has since been upgraded to Project Online and PowerBI. The Customer has since expanded usage to about 12 sites, replacing standalone solutions for resource and project planning – including error-prone Excel spreadsheets – with a consistent, systematic, web-based project management solution that still leaves room for customization to the working practices of each site.

The Benefits: The company has seen dramatic time savings for project reporting and forecasting, with one site saving at least 16 hours per week (2 hours per report for each of eight project managers). Senior management is now able to generate reports on demand and has more confidence in its decision-making due to the availability of reliable, current data. The company also experiences fewer budget overruns due to more accurate scheduling and better visibility into resource demands and availability.

CREATING A STANDARD FOR EFFICIENCY

The Customer, together with the TPG specialists, has focused on ways to obtain rapid business benefit from the system. The team designed a standard set of custom fields, a range of fast-start reports and role-based user training materials, while putting a high degree of emphasis on training key users at each site.

The standard fields and reports are ready to use but can still be adjusted to the working practices at each site.

Always careful to ensure adoption and user acceptance, The Customer team enables users to use their preferred timesheet solutions to enter their hours worked.

It was ensured that reports and forecasts are consistent across all users, too.

The team has also set up an online community where new users at The Customer’s sites can learn tips and tricks for creating reports and share good practice in terms of both the application and project management processes.

And new sites benefit from this rapid deployment approach too, as the consistency across project management processes enables the Customer to roll out its standard solution to new sites in as little as six weeks.

TIME SAVINGS: 16 HOURS PER WEEK MINIMUM

One of the pilot sites that has since gone live with the Microsoft Project Online solution has achieved outstanding results in terms of time, effort and cost savings. A project manager at one of the Customer's subsidiaries says it noticed immediate efficiency benefits and has made a huge difference to the production of project plans and reports.

At this subsidiary, users also wanted to be able to slice and dice data from their reports, so on TPG's recommendation they implemented PowerBI, Microsoft's intuitive business analytics service, to use alongside the project management system.

“Overall, the solution has produced significant benefits across the business, contributing to customer satisfaction, too.”

“We had been using Microsoft Project Server 2010 and were happy with that, but once TPG helped us upgrade to Project Online along with PowerBI, things got even better,” notes the project manager.

“Now, each project manager saves as much as two hours a week per report. With eight project managers, that adds up to a lot of hours in the week, so we're really happy with the results!”

TPG staff trained the project manager and others at the subsidiary to produce tailored reports whenever necessary. The project manager notes that the system is so easy to use that senior managers can now generate reports themselves with a couple of clicks, rather than asking him or other project managers to produce them.

“Today, our cost and delivery estimates are more accurate too, contributing to customer satisfaction. And the system makes it easier for us to keep to our schedules as we have a better handle on planning and executing each project and sub-project in our division. Overall, the solution has produced significant benefits across the business,” he states.

The engineering director agrees: “On a corporate level, it enables senior vice-presidents of engineering to generate meaningful reports and insight on where the company stands in terms of project budgets, estimates-to-complete and resource capacity and conflicts.”

And he adds: “We are starting to see fewer budget overruns than previously. The days of inefficient, ad-hoc and error-prone Excel forecasts are well and truly over! It's made our whole business more efficient and more competitive, while improving customer confidence.”

NEXT STEPS

The engineering director and his team are continuing the rollout of the project management solution to the remainder of the 36 development sites.

In addition, The Customer envisages interconnecting Microsoft Project with SAP and other solutions that are used enterprise-wide. “We'll be using TPG PSLink for that – we've already scoped it out and set up a test environment,” comments the engineering director. “We're testing it at a project level initially and – as is our style – will deploy it in a phased approach once the data synchronization between SAP and Microsoft Project can be run automatically.

Once we have an extended project management data set, we will utilise the PowerBI reporting tool to analyse trends and correlations across functional processes to bring more predictive insight,” he concludes.

SOLUTION PARTNER

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