

CASE STUDY

Intercable Group

TPG project and portfolio management solution grows with the demands of the future

The Intercable Group has a broad and varied range of products and services: from the development and production of tools and components and new solutions for the automotive industry to special tools for power distribution. The internationally active group of companies supplies high-profile customers from the automotive and electrical industries.

As the company grew, so did the demands on the IT department. The services of this cross-sectional department of the high-tech company are in demand in all areas of the company working with computers and software. To be able to better plan and manage the large number of open IT projects, but also document their implementation, the Intercable Group was looking for a professional solution for project and portfolio management (PPM). TPG The Project Group was chosen as a partner along with the TPG ProjectPowerPack product based on the Microsoft Power Platform. The full integration into the familiar Microsoft 365 world made the implementation easy and stands out as very user-friendly and optimally future-proof.

Industry: Automotive und Electrical
Department: Project Management Office
Solution: TPG ProjectPowerPack



intercable



EXCEL WAS TO BE REPLACED

In modern organizations, the work of an IT department goes far beyond providing the PC and server infrastructure and keeping it up to date. No one knows this better than Markus Kircher, Team Leader Business Application at the South Tyrolean Intercable Group: “There is IT in almost every department.” Intercable Group’s IT department, with its approximately 30 professionals, has about 40 open projects underway at times.

At some point, the Excel spreadsheet with the IT projects that had been kept up to then reached its limits. „We kept running into problems, especially when many project managers and staff were accessing the Excel list at the same time.” There is a large number of potential sources of error. The file can crash. New data is not entered consistently. Changes are not saved.

Kircher and his team wanted to change that. “We wanted to have a multi-project tool that we could use to plan and control the entire project portfolio. At the same time, it should facilitate comprehensive reporting to top management.”

SUBSCRIPTION MODEL KEEPS COSTS TRANSPARENT

The PPM tool had to meet three requirements: it had to be cloud-based and not a standalone on-premises solution. It needed to be modular and expandable. Plus, it should fit into the existing system landscape in the best possible way.

“We were already using Microsoft Office and Microsoft Power Platform products such as Microsoft Project for the Web, Microsoft Power BI and Microsoft Power Automate,” Kircher reports. Given these criteria, TPG The Project Group with the TPG ProjectPowerPack product were chosen after the selection process and a short test phase.

“With the TPG ProjectPowerPack, we have managed to implement a user-friendly solution to actively support project managers in planning, recording and documenting their projects. In addition, the solution integrates perfectly into our Microsoft landscape and also provides all functions centrally in one place via Microsoft Teams.”

“I’m always amazed that new project managers can start working with the tool after a short introduction of half an hour to an hour.”

Markus Kircher, Team Leader Business Application, IT Project Management, Intercable Group

Ultimately, the fact that the tool relies on a subscription model won them over. The costs remain transparent, are inexpensive to start with, and can be spread over time as needed. “At the same time, I have the assurance of support from Microsoft and TPG and benefit from further development via updates.”

Once TPG ProjectPowerPack had been selected, it was not difficult to tailor the PPM environment to Intercable Group’s requirements, says TPG project management expert Michael Nicholson. The central focus is a solution that can be used effectively out of the box. Then, customers can choose from a wide range of project management disciplines: which ones do I need right from the start? Which ones can be added later? These questions were settled at the very beginning in a joint configuration workshop.

IMPLEMENTATION SUCCESSFUL IN A VERY SHORT TIME

One advantage, according to Nicholson, was that the “Intercable Group team already had experience working with Microsoft Power Platform technologies. That’s why we were able to implement and hand over the PPM solutions within a very short time.” Onboarding, training and comprehensive documentation accompanied the transition and ensured user acceptance.

LEAN CONFIGURATION ENABLES EASY TRAINING

“The training was easy,” says Intercable expert Kircher. “In a one-hour session, we covered everything because we configured the PPM tool to be as lean as possible at launch.” Getting started was also straightforward because the application has its origins in the familiar Microsoft 365 environment. „The look & feel is the same as in the other Microsoft Office programs. Even for new users, it’s as if they’re dealing with familiar software.

“One of the big advantages of this solution is: it’s intuitive to use,” confirms Nicholson. The recognition value is very high for those who have already worked with Microsoft products.”

KPIS IN TRAFFIC LIGHT COLORS FOR A QUICK OVERVIEW

A central list of projects now serves as a starting point. Anyone who views it can see the projects’ status at a glance. For example, there are key performance indicators (KPIs) in the traffic light colors green, yellow or red. The list view also provides information on budget, deadlines or effort for each project.

If you open an individual project, you can see immediately what the status is. This is due to the implemented

business workflow that guides the user through the relevant project in a stringent manner. In this way, the entire project life cycle can be mapped on a timeline, from initiation, through planning, execution and control, to completion. Microsoft Project for the Web is used for scheduling.

An important part of Intercable Group’s workflow is reporting. The program is set up to request regular reports on the project status from those responsible. Contrary to previous Excel times, the reporting requests are automated. After all, the reports serve to provide transparency to management.

MICROSOFT TEAMS MAKES THE SOLUTION COMPLETE

For collaboration, it also comes in handy for Intercable Group that Microsoft Teams is fully integrated with the PPM solution. Not only can individual teams be created directly from the application with a single click. Project management disciplines such as scheduling or cost planning can also be handled from Microsoft Teams. “The Teams integration makes the PPM solution complete,” Kircher sums it up. “There is no media discontinuity in handling the projects. For some, the PPAM application is just another feature in Microsoft Teams – like the notebook or file storage.”

The cloud-based solution now makes it possible to manage projects regardless of location or fixed office hours. On the one hand, this benefits employees who work partly from home even after the restrictions imposed by the COVID pandemic. On the other hand, the Intercable Group is an international group of companies with subsidiaries worldwide. Access is possible from anywhere via the Internet. The tool can therefore also be used by external partners, companies or suppliers involved in projects.





“The core of our package is a standard product that is based on the Microsoft Power Platform and can be implemented out of the box in a very short time. At the same time, it can be tailored excellently to individual customer needs providing them with a familiar environment right from the start.”

“The solution is highly flexible and future-proof. It can grow with the increasing demands of customers by providing additional functionalities when they are needed. What’s more, it’s completely cloud-based, so there’s no need to buy new hardware or worry about update strategies.”

Michael Nicholson, Senior Consultant TPG

HIGH ACCEPTANCE AND NEW FUNCTIONS WITH JUST A FEW CLICKS

After getting started with the basic PPM disciplines, the IT department of the Intercable Group is now taking the next step: expanding the functionality to include resource planning. Which staff resources are available for new requests? Controlling questions like these can be enabled with just a few clicks.

The TPG ProjectPowerPack grows with its users and remains flexible for the requirements of the future. Another advantage is that the Intercable Group IT team can make a number of adjustments on their own. “Always knowing that we have TPG in the background in case our knowledge isn’t sufficient,” says team leader Kircher.

In view of its user-friendliness, the new PPM is widely accepted by the IT managers of the Intercable Group. Already, other departments are showing interest in TPG ProjectPowerPack.



SHORT PROJECT PROFILE

THE COMPANY

Intercable was founded in 1972 and has long-lasting roots in Brunico / South Tyrol. The Intercable Group supplies automotive manufacturers with connectors and busbars for hybrid and electric vehicles. It has also made a name for itself as a manufacturer of insulated and hydraulic tools and connectors for electrical wholesalers and industry. With more than 2250 employees at 19 branches, Intercable stands for innovation, speed and quality.

THE CHALLENGE

The Excel list previously used to manage a large number of IT projects could no longer meet the requirements and was prone to errors. As the company grew, the project and portfolio management (PPM) had to become more efficient and, of course, enable better reporting to management. What was needed was a tool that was cloud-based, modular, expandable and therefore future-proof. In addition, it should integrate into the existing Microsoft system landscape in the best possible way.

The Project Group

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THE SOLUTION

The TPG ProjectPowerPack product is built on the Microsoft Power Platform and uses Microsoft Project for the Web scheduling as its core. With Power Apps, Power Automate and Power BI, the application uses the latest Microsoft technology and is highly future-proof. The full integration of Microsoft Teams allows new users to get started quickly and complete their tasks in a familiar software environment. Due to the subscription model, the costs remain transparent.

THE BENEFITS

The PPM application grows with the demands placed on it: Starting with a basic configuration that includes only the essential project management disciplines, it can be successively expanded with new functionalities as required. It can be used both by employees and by external project participants. Its usability ensures a high level of acceptance. Comprehensive reporting improves portfolio control and increases transparency for top management.

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