

CASE STUDY

Sunfire GmbH

Dynamic Growth Demands Efficient
Project and Resource Management



Open for New Solutions

As a highly innovative company, **Sunfire®** provides answers to pressing issues of our time with its developments and products related to the generation of green energy. With two different processes, Sunfire produces hydrogen using electricity from renewable sources and water. In addition, the company has the technology to produce e-fuels, i.e. synthetic fuels made from CO₂ and water for a climate-friendly operation of combustion engines.

The company's innovative spirit proved to be a key advantage in the realignment of project and resource management. The openness for new solutions, at all management levels as well as among users, made it easier and faster to implement new software and the associated processes. With the packaged and customizable solution **TPG QuickStart based on Microsoft Project Online**, Sunfire laid the foundations for smooth project and resource management in a highly dynamic and rapidly growing environment in April 2022.

Industry	Energy Industry
Department	Project Management Office
Solution	Microsoft Project Online TPG QuickStart, TPG ReportPack, TPG TeamManager

THE INNOVATION MINDSET MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Processes, tools and resources form a magic triangle in companies. All sides must be in due proportion to each other – if the number of employees grows fast, the three components no longer fit together. When Sunfire realized that its previous project management approaches would no longer keep pace with its resources and tasks, the company reacted in time. The challenge was to fully professionalize capacity planning.

However: a dynamic project environment with high resource utilization may demand the implementation of new tools and processes – but may be an obstacle at the same time. After all, it is anything but easy to prioritize what is important and to provide capacity for an internal change process while working at full capacity with urgent customer and development projects as part of ongoing business.

Sunfire not only saw the necessity for a professional project, portfolio and resource management solution at the right time but also implemented it resolutely. “Our very first talk was in September 2021, and by November we were able to start with the project,” recalls Michael Nicholson, project manager at TPG. “After that, everything went extremely quickly – by the end of April 2022, the existing projects had been migrated and the go-live had taken place.”

FINDING ANSWERS TO THE CRUCIAL QUESTIONS

In 2021, Sunfire had approximately 400 employees across three locations in Germany and Switzerland. At this point, the existing project and resource planning system had reached its limits. Stefan Linke, Head of the Project Management Office at Sunfire, recalls: “Back then, we had a self-installed MS Project solution which was no longer ideal for us. This also applied to resource management which project managers handled via individual Excel files.”

Linke continues: “Every year, we manage 15 to 30 projects of very different sizes. These range from the installation of a test stand within a couple of weeks to projects worth millions with a duration of three to five years.” To be able to manage this and be prepared for further growth, “we wanted to revamp our project and resource management, make it economically better, more efficient and faster,” says the Head of PMO.



“TPG’s best practice tips were very valuable to us.”

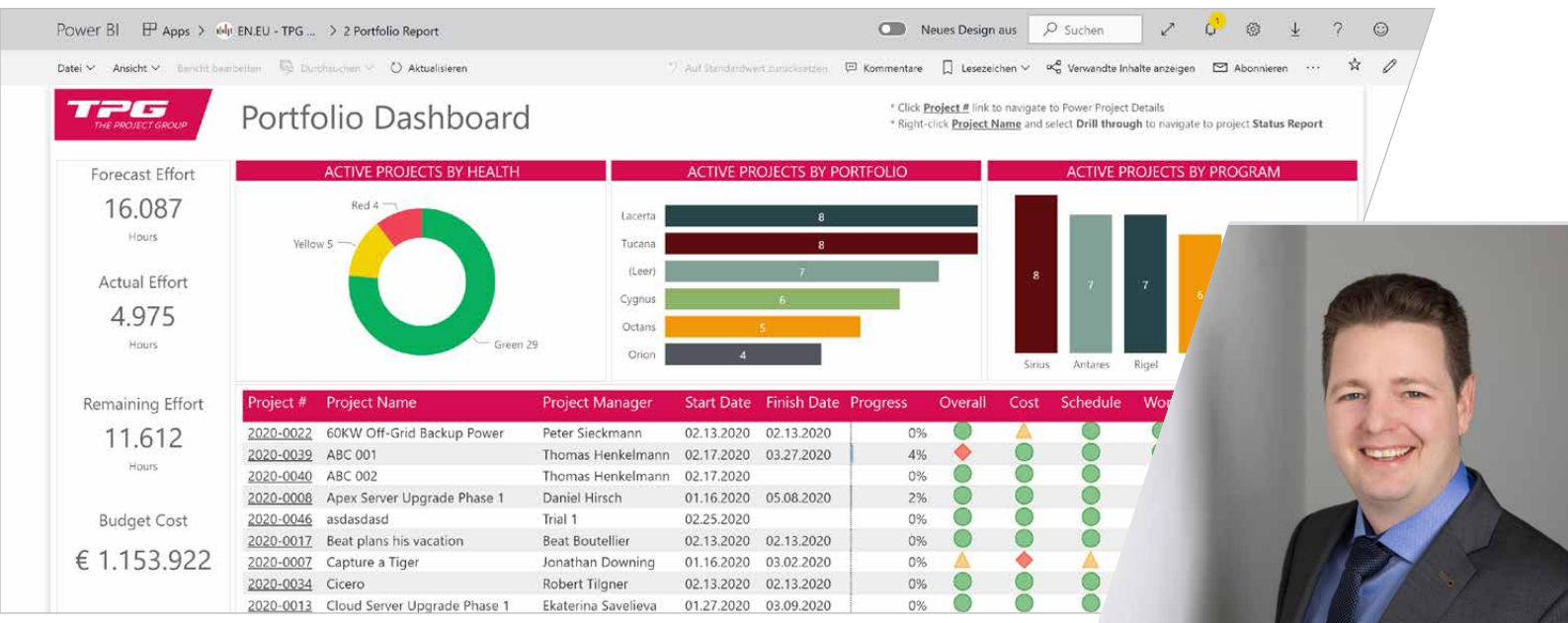
“TPG does very good public relations work. I’m a regular guest at the webinars. This has paid off – for both sides.”

Stefan Linke, Head of Project Management Office, Sunfire GmbH

“In the past, we didn’t take absences and especially operations into account,” explains Linke. “We needed a system that would answer three questions: How many staff will we need in the future? Which tasks do we have to outsource? With the resources available, what are we currently unable to handle?”

The solution Linke defined was TPG QuickStart (including Power BI for the business intelligence) based on MS Project Online, with the addition of TPG TeamManager. “I was a regular guest at the webinars conducted by TPG,” reports Stefan Linke. “That is how I knew the company and its services.”

“The customer knew exactly what they wanted and where they wanted to go,” confirms Michael Nicholson. “The direct result of this: Sunfire was quick to follow through with TPG QuickStart. Step by step, they addressed scheduling first, followed by resource management and lastly business intelligence.”



“The young, dynamic team at Sunfire is open to innovation and has welcomed tips as well as best practices models. This is why the implementation of the new solution worked so well.”

“The project success is also due to the customer – because Sunfire used and implemented the knowledge we provided.”

Michael Nicholson, TPG

“The TPG solution has made our resource situation more transparent enabling us to recognize employee overload and underload at an early stage and to react to it,” explains Linke. “The special functions in **TPG TeamManager** allow us to work with the actual project availabilities. This is the only way to determine the actual duration of a work package or project. Linke: “Even if this involves a shift in the project schedule at times, we are now able to depict a realistic situation.”

On a tactical-operational level, it means that Sunfire achieves an overview as to whether unexpected work fits into the current utilization. Stefan Linke: “The best practice recommendations by TPG enabled us to smooth out our coordination needs. We now have a constant resource situation for several weeks in advance.”

POTENTIAL IDENTIFIED, ADDED VALUE PERCEIVED

“There is a great readiness to innovate throughout the company. You’re preaching to the converted,” Nicholson has learned. In his view, this became manifest when the potential of the new solutions was recognized immediately and the added value was perceived. In particular, the company used the administrator and user training included in the packages to gain an overview of the possibilities of the optimized project and resource management quickly.

With the consulting budget included, corporate processes and software solution were adapted to each other in efficient workshops in a minimum of time. “What added to this, was Sunfire’s wish to do many things themselves when setting up the tools,” Nicholson reports.

“In each case, we had demonstrated what worked in which way in order to enable the customer’s own involvement. As an open-content company, we at TPG don’t want to create any dependencies in general. We prefer to accompany and support customers in implementing changes and enhancements on their own. This is the fastest way for them to learn, and we can ensure the best possible operation of the solution.”

Further evidence of the spirit of innovation is the readiness of administrators and users to take up new processes and learn fast. This is quite a challenge: “In the two-day administrator training, for instance, participants receive really intensive input,” as Nicholson knows. “But TPG gave us a lot of support in getting ready to use the new tools,” reports Stefan Linke. “In particular, the ten golden rules helped a lot. These are clear, practical tips which TPG incidentally also provides and explains in video format on the TPG website.



“There is no instance where this could have gone better.”

Stefan Linke

“What’s more, the best practice tips we got from the TPG team were invaluable,” emphasizes Linke. “Not only do they make it easier to adjust to the new software, but they also help you leverage its full potential precisely.”

TRUST IS THE BASIS FOR SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

The basis for this good collaboration, Linke and Nicholson emphasize, is trust. “We have a similar mindset on both sides,” Nicholson observes. “It involves drive, customer orientation but also the appreciation of a personal level when working together.” Stefan Linke also sees it that way: “The cooperation was also very pleasant on a personal level. It was highly professional in the matter at hand and easy-going in the personal interaction.”

This paid off once again in the last project phase, in the implementation of the Power BI component. “We had held a short workshop on this topic, and it was an immediate success,” recalls Nicholson. “Throughout the course of the project, we were preparing the customer in a comprehensive and focused way for the overall system with its higher-level evaluation options. Thus, a holistic vision was formed at an early stage, allowing efficient and targeted work. For instance, the necessary alignment of key performance indicators (KPI) to the company’s needs was carried out in the best possible way.”

With the freely scalable solution, Sunfire is now ideally positioned for further business growth. “The system will last for a while, even if we grow bigger fast,” Linke is certain. In addition, the tools installed could do much more than is currently required, adds the Head of PMO.

END-TO-END SYSTEM LANDSCAPE FACILITATES DYNAMIC GROWTH

Nonetheless, accompanying measures are planned to link the new project and resource management even better to the other management tools. “An end-to-end system landscape makes sense, particularly in the event of dynamic growth, in order to avoid error sources and lighten the project managers’ workload as much as possible. If a piece of information is already available in another system, it does not make sense to have somebody type it out.

Unfortunately, this is still common practice in many companies. As a rule, investments in an end-to-end system landscape pay for themselves quickly and are very popular with end users,” Nicholson explains. Stefan Linke announces: “Next, we want to set up an **interface** with our personnel management system.” He is fully satisfied with the collaboration between the Sunfire and TPG teams: “There is no instance where this could have gone better,” Stefan Linke sums up.





SHORT PROJECT PROFILE

THE COMPANY:

The German company **Sunfire** is a global leader for industrial electrolyzers. It develops and produces highly efficient industrial electrolyzers generating renewable hydrogen and syngas. In this way, Sunfire enables the sustainable transformation of energy-intensive sectors such as the chemical, fuel and steel industries. The company relies on innovative high-temperature SOEC electrolyzers and a high-pressure alkaline technology that has been tried and tested over decades.

THE CHALLENGE:

As a dynamically growing company, Sunfire was up against the challenge of aligning its existing tools and processes to the fast increase in employee numbers without disrupting its ongoing business. This included the introduction of professional project management with the setup of a **Project Management Office (PMO)** and the implementation of powerful software for project, portfolio and resource management.

THE SOLUTION:

With **TPG QuickStart**, the company opted for a customizable packaged solution enabling the quick availability of a project management system based on Microsoft Project Online. The **Power BI (Business Intelligence) Report-Pack** as well as a workshop and training for users are also part of the TPG QuickStart package. In addition, Sunfire chose **TPG TeamManager**, a powerful tool for resource management.

THE BENEFITS:

Within only a few weeks, Sunfire future-proofed its project management during ongoing business with high resource utilization. Due to the scalability of the solution, the company is also positioned for further growth. In addition, Sunfire now has a holistic resource management tool for the Engineering department with TPG TeamManager. Power BI analyzes processes and provides processed data and key performance indicators (KPIs) as a basis for sound business decisions.

The Project Group

Informationstechnologie GmbH

Destouchesstr. 68 | 80796 Munich | Germany
Tel. +49 89 615 593 30 | info@theprojectgroup.com

www.theprojectgroup.com
www.theprojectgroup.com/blog
www.youtube.com/tpgtheprojectgroup
[@tpg_com](https://www.twitter.com/tpgcom)

Client:

Sunfire GmbH

Gasanstaltstraße 2 | 01237 Dresden, Germany
T: +49 351 896797-0

www.sunfire.de

The word "Sunfire" and the "Flame" logo are registered trademarks of Sunfire GmbH.