



TV Giant Automates Workflow, Boosts Data Access with Information Management System

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Entertainment—television

Customer Profile

MTV Networks, based in New York, is a leading operator of entertainment cable channels, including MTV and other niche brands around the world. It employs 7,000 people and has 10,000 desktops.

Business Situation

MTV needed to automate three manual, paper-based workflows and provide staffers with self-serve access to actionable business information.

Solution

MTV chose Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007 to create three different solutions in one development environment in just three weeks.

Benefits

- Reduces time it takes to process new employees by at least 1 day
- Cuts time it takes to provide auditors with data from one week to 1 day (8 hrs)
- Reduces time it takes to fill out new employee form by 15 to 20 minutes
- Saves 4 hours a week in project updates

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Daphne Thompson, Business Intelligence Analyst, MTV

MTV Networks International is a global media network with a channel reach of 1.4 billion people. MTV's Information Services and Technology (IS&T) department wanted to reduce the time that was wasted on manual processes. It chose Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007 to solve three business problems with one product. IS&T used the out-of-the-box workflow capabilities of SharePoint Server 2007 to improve departmental efficiencies by automating a paper-based process for new employees. IS&T then created a collaboration site for project management. IS&T used the business intelligence capabilities of SharePoint Server 2007 to create a dashboard that provides analytics on application metrics, saving 6 hours a week with an automated data submission process. MTV plans to replicate similar solutions built on Office SharePoint Server 2007 for the rest of the company.

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Situation

MTV Networks International is one of the world’s largest television networks, spanning niche brands from pre-school to adulthood, including premier multimedia entertainment brands MTV and Nickelodeon. MTV brands are seen in more than 495 million households and are presented in 32 languages via 133 locally programmed and operated TV channels and 138 Web sites. In addition to its TV products, MTV produces films through MTV Films in association with Paramount Pictures.

MTV has a large, 150-member Information Services and Technology (IS&T) department, which, until recently, operated as a decentralized organization with separate units located at 9 different MTV locations around the world. In an effort to eliminate the subsequent duplication of routine IT support and administrative tasks, MTV centralized IT operations at its New York headquarters. The move underlies a growing interest in enterprise software that fosters global communication and collaboration. Information sharing among globally dispersed offices and virtual teams had been difficult, with data stored on local file shares and communication relying too heavily on paper, facsimiles, and telephone.

A More Visionary Role for IT

The newly centralized IS&T department is galvanized to solve these issues by evaluating, recommending, and deploying the most efficient technology to increase collaboration and communication. “It’s long been true that MTV is known for its state-of-the-art creativity and leading-edge productions for the consumer, but we have not kept pace with that level of innovation with internal business processes,” says Daphne Thompson, Business Intelligence Analyst at MTV. “Right now we are seeing a growing emphasis within the IS&T department to take more of a visionary role in

finding technology to respond to corporate directives like promoting organizational efficiency. We want to deliver solutions that improve global collaboration and connect people with the information they need to work more efficiently.”

So when MTV IT staffers in Thompson’s group—which is dedicated to investigating and deploying new technology—heard about Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007, they wanted to test-drive the new technology to address three particularly arduous business processes within the IS&T department.

Inefficiencies Within the IT Department

The first of these processes focused on the creation of a User ID Request Form, which records the permissions granted to a new employee, contractor, or freelancer to access the corporate applications and resources that are required to do his or her job. Initially, the new employee’s manager printed out a spreadsheet created with the Microsoft Office Excel® spreadsheet software that contained basic employee information, and then signed and faxed it to the service desk, TechConnect. The service desk then created an incident in the incident tracking system and sent out requests to other managers with jurisdiction over the applications to which the new employee required access. Signatures were required at every step along the way, and the document was e-mailed, faxed, or even hand-delivered to the requisite approvers. Finally, TechConnect would close the incident and open another for a desktop technician to set up a desktop computer or mobile computer for the new user.

“This manual process took between one and three days to complete and was a headache for everyone,” says Thompson. “We needed the signatures to comply with Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) and we needed the documents stored somewhere for our auditors to evaluate how

and when we gave out permissions to corporate information resources. But every quarter, it took a week for us to re-create the paper trails and gather the information from different places to prove that we complied with SOX. Management always questioned why it took so long!”

Another manual business process that wasted time concerned a weekly update of the status of all IT projects. The senior director of the Desktop & Client Services department spent six hours every week collecting project updates from different IT managers during weekly meetings and compiling the information in a project status e-mail, which he sent out to the managers and his vice president to keep everyone up to date.

A third process the IS&T department wanted to change was the weekly distribution of performance and maintenance metrics of six key IT applications, including Microsoft Systems Management Server 2003 and help-desk data compiled from multiple places. “When I first started, it took all day to go to the people responsible for these applications and collect information and put it in Excel for analysis,” Thompson recalls. “Now I only have to visit two people, but I still have to compile the rest of the data from e-mails and maintain the Excel document myself and then copy and paste it in another e-mail to distribute it to my management team. This takes a total of two hours every week.”

These three processes within IT centered on the same business pain: the inability to easily access and share information among distributed staff members who were involved in a manual workflow. The resulting inefficiencies and wasted time cost the IT department in lost productivity and extra hours spent away from staffers’ core competencies.

“The more we looked at Office SharePoint Server 2007, the more we saw it as a single solution that we could apply to all these processes,” says Thompson. “The product’s close integration with the 2007 Microsoft Office system and the Windows Vista™ operating system looked good to us. With a common implementation platform and development environment, we could all work together more efficiently as we manipulate the products to create desktop solutions. It also bodes well for a minimal learning curve for MTV staffs that will use the solutions. We decided that Office SharePoint Server 2007 looked like an excellent solution for these three scenarios.”

Solution

Thompson’s work experience centered on enterprise reporting solutions, and she doesn’t consider herself a developer. Yet, despite being new to Office SharePoint Server 2007 technologies, she took ownership of the three projects and assigned herself an ambitious three weeks to complete an Office SharePoint Server 2007 solution for each.

She began by re-creating the User ID Request Form in the Microsoft Office InfoPath® 2007 information-gathering program. She then took advantage of the Office InfoPath Forms Services capabilities in Office SharePoint Server 2007 to provide a Web browser form-filling experience for those users who don’t have Office InfoPath 2007 installed on their computer.

“This was an immediate advantage for us,” Thompson says. “Because Office SharePoint Server 2007 is such an extensible product, we can serve our Mac user base. Now we can use Office InfoPath 2007 to design the form and we can use the Web browser-enabled forms of Office SharePoint Server 2007 to capture information from the new users.”

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Under the new solution, the new recruit's manager accesses the new User ID Request Form via an Office SharePoint Server 2007 site, inputs employee information and the appropriate requests for access to applications that employee will need. This begins a workflow with automated e-mails sent to the managers who have the authority to approve or deny access to those applications. They log on to Office SharePoint Server 2007 and select “Approve” or “Deny,” and the status of the employee is updated to either “Working” or “Request Denied.” Meanwhile, all the information on every new recruit is stored in an Office SharePoint Server 2007 library.

For the project status scenario, Thompson used Microsoft Office SharePoint Designer 2007 and site templates to create an online collaboration space to facilitate the exchange, consolidation, and viewing of project status information by managers, project leads, and executives.

The integration between Office SharePoint Server 2007 and the 2007 Microsoft Office system programs was also a success factor in automating the collection and distribution of weekly IT metrics from key applications and the help-desk systems. Thompson created an Office Excel 2007 workbook dashboard and saved it to an Office SharePoint Server 2007 document library, using Excel Services technology. This arrangement allows the application administrators to submit the weekly metrics to the database, where Excel Services serves it to the dashboard on Office SharePoint Server 2007 and it becomes available for viewing. “I can administer user rights and define viewing parameters,” adds Thompson. “And I'm right on track with my timeline.”

Once the three solutions are deployed to the IS&T department, Thompson expects to continue with the deployment across the

company. “We've seen how Office SharePoint Server 2007 will bring value to the rest of the organization,” she says. “It automates business processes and helps people find information they need. Where wouldn't that be useful?”

Benefits

The IS&T department at MTV is expecting to extrapolate the benefits it's seen so far from Office SharePoint Server 2007 to the rest of the organization, empowering the department to make a strategic impact within the company. “The potential of Office SharePoint Server 2007 to make it easier for IT to manage data is huge,” says Thompson. “One product lets us solve workflow, business intelligence, and collaboration issues across MTV.”

Office SharePoint Server 2007 has already solved a number of problems within the IS&T department, which sets the stage for enterprise-wide benefits such as improving content management and workflow, increasing business insight, and empowering employees to find information and share knowledge.

Automating Workflow, Improving Content Management

Now that the User ID Request Form process has been automated, the time it takes to process new employees, freelancers, and contractors has been reduced from between one and three days to two days. Because Office SharePoint Server 2007 stores all relevant employee information, including e-mail message content, in one single place, complying with auditor's requests and SOX is greatly simplified. “Instead of taking one week every three months to find data and sift through thousands of e-mails for auditors, we can accumulate the information in 8 hours,” says Thompson. “That's going to make management very happy!”

And because Thompson revised the form she built in Office InfoPath 2007, the time it takes for managers to fill out the required information has been reduced. Now the progression of fields and drop-down boxes is based on logic. "It will ask if you need a new application and if you say 'Yes', the form opens up a box that lists applications and you can check one. If you say 'No', you don't see the list and move on," explains Thompson. "I wanted a new way to gather the content and clean up the data we'll store. Instead of it taking 20 to 30 minutes, on average, to fill out the form, now it takes 5 to 10 minutes."

The benefits of having new IT staffers' information available in a single place for easy access extends to many different departments in MTV. For example, according to Thompson, human resources staffers will want to see how many new employees have joined the organization and compare it to their own numbers; specific application owners will be interested in how many people are accessing their applications and how often in order to manage software licenses; and financial staffers will use the information to monitor how much the IS&T department is spending on giving people access to different resources to evaluate if the resources are being used enough to warrant that expense.

"We have plans to deploy similar solutions in different departments, potentially hitting a user base of thousands because anyone coming into the company will have to fill out that form," says Thompson. "We'll start with Human Resources, and Purchasing has also requested a similar workflow to track server requests."

Increasing Business Insight

Providing all those people with easily accessible, current business data naturally improves their insight into the business. This is also evident with the improved analysis of IT applications' metrics achieved using the

Office SharePoint Server 2007 and Excel Services solution. "I have given viewers different ways to analyze the data, allowing them to do comparisons of previous weeks, or evaluating service calls between different applications, for example," explains Thompson. "This Office SharePoint Server 2007 solution provides a much richer, self-serve analytical environment, giving us better business insight. And I'm saving approximately 6 hours a week by not having to manually update and distribute the metrics."

As for the rest of MTV, Thompson sees a ubiquitous need for improving business insight, "anywhere and anytime you have to prove what money has been spent or what you need for a budget. Decision makers want to see something to base their decision on, whether it's a growth pattern or how many calls you get this week compared to last week. An Office SharePoint Server 2007 solution like the one we did for weekly metrics is applicable practically anywhere in the company."

Collaborating Online

The Office SharePoint Server 2007 site that Thompson created for project owners and content providers to submit their project update information facilitates online project collaboration that's saving everyone time. It's also providing up-to-date information for the whole IS&T department. The senior director is saving approximately 4 hours a week on unproductive information gathering; instead, he simply logs on to the site and assesses the projects there. The benefits roll up to upper management who appreciate self-serve access to information in their busy work lives.

"When I was doing the project status site, I had comments from the application development department that they could use the same thing for their projects," recalls

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For more information about MTV products and services, call (212) 258-8000 or visit the Web site at: www.mtv.com

Thompson. "I got a call last week from a vice president in the company who was interested in doing the same thing for Procurement, Finance, and Auditing, because these departments wanted to better manage their projects and create online forums for teamwork. Office SharePoint Server 2007 benefits are easily replicable throughout the company because it solves a basic business dilemma: how to increase operational efficiency by improving information flow between data sources and among people."

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