Project Manager Allows Check-ups on the Move for Health Ministry's IT Projects

Customer: Ministry of Health

Website: www.moh.gov.sa/en

Customer Size: 250,000 employees

Country or Region: Saudi Arabia

Industry: Public Health & Social Services

Customer Profile

Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Health runs more than 300 hospitals and 3,000 clinics. It has a 10-year e-health strategy to exploit digital technology and its Project Management Office for IT projects.

Software and Services
- Microsoft EPM 2013
- Microsoft Project Professional 2013
- Microsoft Lync Server 2010
- Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010

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> Eng. Ahmed Alhedaithy, Director—Project Management Office, Ministry of Health

Ministry of Health (MoH) in Saudi Arabia could hardly avoid noticing Saudis' enthusiasm for mobile electronic devices, which are used widely, including for accessing social networking websites. In 2013 the ministry's Project Management Office (PMO) realized that it could exploit that popularity to improve further its oversight of IT projects, by upgrading from its Microsoft Enterprise Project Management (EPM) 2010 software to the 2013 version.

Business Needs

The PMO has responsibility for the hundreds of IT projects needed to support a 10-year e-health strategy, which the Ministry of Health (MoH) launched in 2011. "The e-health strategy includes everything from a small IT system for a single office to ministry-wide projects. It requires a lot of time and attention and many risks and issues need to be solved", says the PMO Director Eng. Ahmed Alhedaithy.

"There are a lot of questions from both sides, from the project managers and the management," says the PMO officer Abdullah Alsubaie. "They all assume that the PMO will solve all the problems and stop the projects from going wrong."

Since 2011 the PMO had already been using the 2010 version of Microsoft's Enterprise Project Management (EPM) software, which allowed it to plan and track IT project activity overall and in detail, as well as produce timesheets, graphical analysis of workloads and handle administration. The EPM was used by about 90 people, including up to 15 in the PMO.

When the 2013 version of the EPM appeared on the market, the PMO saw that the new version's improved communication and collaboration functions could be used to exploit the use of multiple types of mobile devices by MoH project staff. "One of the major reasons [for considering an upgrade] was this mobility aspect,' says the PMO Consultant Furqan Asrar. "We thought that was a great feature for us.

For example, in the EPM 2013, with the Microsoft voice-over-internet and instant messaging software Lync installed, contacts can be initiated simply by hovering over a name and content can be copied and pasted to Microsoft Office products. Content can also be synchronized easily to the SharePoint collaboration software.

The PMO also saw that the EPM 2013 included a friendlier interface than its 2010 version.

Solution

The new version of the EPM offered the chance to help project managers further with their work. The PMO wants the project managers to be more engaged by using it.

Therefore, by September 2013 the MoH had decided to upgrade to the EPM 2013 — the first who implemented Enterprise Project Management 2013 in the MEA region in the healthcare industry, according to the Microsoft Healthcare MEA team. Yet the MoH was careful to run trials before confirming the move, including checking whether all the MoH's many sites would migrate properly.

Another area of concern was related to the existing master-project relationship within the organization, with the PMO wanting to make sure that hierarchy was maintained. The latter concern proved groundless, although the first couple of checks threw up some problems.

Nevertheless, overall the move to the EPM 2013 looked a winner and the migration was completed in December 2013. The PMO handled the switch itself and the licensing was covered by the existing Enterprise Agreement, all of which made the move cheap. "It was value for money,' says Asrar.

The installation produced some problems that required a lot of time and patience. However, project managers are happy with their improved access to the PMO system while senior managers have project and overall dashboards that give them access to as much detail as they require.

Procurement of the EPM 2010 through a Microsoft partner had also been simple, by updating an existing Microsoft Enterprise Agreement. Once installed, the EPM was easy to use, as most project managers were familiar with other Microsoft products.

Most users supported a later move to give the MoH's suppliers access so that they could input information. Project managers were happy because they had all the information from the vendors in one place.

Benefits

The EPM allows the PMO to highlight project difficulties, help project managers and pass serious problems to senior managers. It produces regular, detailed management reports. Users can access the system from anywhere and are using the system more.

• **More oversight**
"We have an enterprise view of all the projects; how they are progressing, the current issue, the current risks," says Alsubaie. The EPM also produces bi-weekly management reports, with risk assessments and recommendations.
"The senior management is very happy with the dashboards they are working with. They have project dashboards and they have overall dashboards and they can drill down to whatever details the see fit," says Asrar.
The EPM 2013 is accessed by 50 general users, 50–60 project managers and some other people such as team leaders. The total is likely to increase, as the MoH will have plenty more projects in future.

• **More mobility & openness**
Users can access project information in the EPM 2013 from a wide range of mobile operating systems such as Android, iOS, and Windows. Although the PMO helped some users, most switched easily from the PME 2010 because of their familiarity with other Microsoft products.
"They are very happy with the tool and they love the fact that they can now browse on multiple devices and can access this EPM from anywhere," says Alhedaithy.

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