



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

LOCATION:
Chicago, IL, US

ORGANIZATION:
American Hospital Association

YEAR:
2011

ORGANIZATION URL:
<http://www.aha.org>

STATUS:
Laureate

PROJECT NAME:
Social Intranet & Collaboration

CATEGORY:
Collaboration

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The American Hospital Association (AHA) has deployed a Social Intranet & Collaboration platform that enables employees to connect and collaborate with their relevant colleagues for information they need to drive our organizational goals, serve members and achieve our vision. At the AHA, we strive to create a society of healthy communities where all individuals reach their highest potential for health. Our Social Intranet incorporates secure, private social networking tools like blogs, groups, wiki workspaces, profiles, and activity streams that make it easy for employees to collaborate with colleagues and share information enterprise wide. By integrating this social intranet with traditional systems of record and complementing key business processes, this new platform helps us eliminate long standing knowledge silos. Quite simply, our social intranet has become the place where work gets done inside our organization. Prior to deploying our Social Intranet, the AHA had typical ad-hoc collaboration methods: E-mail, file servers, and shared drives that lacked organization and shared access resulting in cluttered inboxes to communicate. We had an intranet, but it was a static site that required IT attention and maintenance to update resulting in information quickly becoming stale – the site had little value to staff's day-to-day activities and overall use and adoption dropped. AHA employees reverted back to e-mail to communicate and find the information they needed to complete projects or serve the AHA's members. This method of communicating caused deep information silos across the organization: If not addressed in a key message, people in disparate departments would miss out on important information that would help them perform their job efficiently. We explored different solutions in this expanding market; our CIO wanted to remain committed to a SaaS-based strategy that kept maintenance and total cost of ownership low. We chose a hybrid SaaS model based appliance from Socialtext, an enterprise social software vendor. In the past, one of the reasons intranets have failed is because they operate in a separate and unconnected environment from key systems already in place. To avoid that fate and ensure staff adoption, we embraced a strategy of "in the flow" integration with existing business processes and systems. Through the use of

Socialtext Connect, an integration offering built on a web-oriented architecture, AHA integrated SaaS-based applications, including Employee Performance Management (Lorennet), HR/Payroll (Ultipro), IT Self-Service Management (Numara Footprints), Document Collaboration & Management (Box.net) & Video Management (Delve Networks). On the front end of the Social Intranet, employees could access these systems through a SaaS based Cloud Security & Single Sign-On application widget (Symplified) that brought access to these systems into their personalized intranet homepages. We also incorporated AHA news feeds from multiple business-units and healthcare industries via RSS. Because staff is delivered content relevant to their specific job role, the intranet has become a natural thing to use every day. It is also a one stop place to find information (like an internal Google). See Appendix 1 & 2 for a high-level overview of the architecture. See Appendix 3 for an interactive presentation and demo.

SOCIETAL BENEFITS

AHA represents and serves 5000+ hospitals, healthcare networks, and their patients, communities and also serves 41,000-plus professionals. By improving the collaboration internally across a diverse and specialized group of business units, it meets AHA's vision "To promote a society of communities where all individuals reach their highest potential for health".

PROJECT BENEFIT EXAMPLE

AHA's use of Social Intranet & Collaboration platform has transformed the way we communicate and collaborate across the organization. It better connects employees with the relevant colleagues and information they need to serve members. We have liberated valuable information that was once locked away in inboxes, shared drives and other methods of storage. We have mapped our social intranet to key business processes and enjoying 95% adoption. Here are three examples of where it has been making a real difference. 1. Strategy Alignment, Project Management & Collaboration - We have built a dynamic Strategy Alignment & Project workspace that connects employees to all strategic objectives, goals and related projects. We currently manage dozens of projects in our social intranet. We now have an internal project page and blog where we list key team members, chronicle updates to strategic initiatives, and keep key stakeholders informed. For example, we decided that we wanted to build mobile applications for AHA related nationwide health care conferences. All the discussions and documentation for these took place in the project workspace. Team members use Signals (micro-blogging) to share short messages and activities. The result: We have seen an 85% reduction in project-related e-mail. We have also completed projects 30% faster on average. 2. Resource Center - We have created a workspace on our social platform to list all the resources, journals and databases available in our Resource Center so staff can quickly locate information via search terms and tags, ask questions and discuss topics. The Resource Center has information that spans a 70 year period of healthcare in America. Because Socialtext has the ability to create templates, people can click a button and have a new page online to input key health care related resources, articles, news or ask a question. Aside from the fact this helps keep our documentation fresh, it got the Resource Center even more on board with the project when they saw its benefits first hand. 3. Open Q&A - Like any organization, AHA employees traditionally struggled when they didn't know who held the right information they needed to perform a key task. In the past, send questions (What is the definition of small hospital or other healthcare related questions?) via e-mail and blast who they thought might be able to respond. Now, people use Signals to ask questions openly to the entire community or a specific community, which is much less intrusive and more effective than e-mail. When someone responds, everyone can see the answer, which has tremendous long term benefits from a knowledge



management perspective. Employees can also do a quick and extensive search on People profiles, learn their skills, and reach out to them for questions as well as project related initiatives. The result of working more openly is that we accelerate project times and serve our members faster. In addition, the ability for employees to view the projects and see the strategy alignment provides a tremendous value and facilitates them to contribute ideas and collaborate more to the projects.

IS THIS PROJECT AN INNOVATION, BEST PRACTICE? Yes

ADDITIONAL PROJECT INFORMATION

This project runs deeper than just collaboration itself. It is part of a wider effort to think holistically about a web-oriented architecture in the 21st century IT environment. Our intranet now provides a social layer that spans the entire enterprise architecture. Relevant information from HR systems, CRM, document management and IT management systems can be surfaced in this social intranet platform and served up to the proper employees who need it. This is saving them time from having to toggle between these apps and dig up information manually. Research suggests this is a huge problem. In a recent article (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/07/technology/07brain.html>) in the New York Times called "your brain on computers," it detailed how much we tether ourselves to the devices and systems around us. The information overload problem is huge at work. In 2008, people consumed three times as much information each day as they did in 1960. And they are constantly shifting their attention. Computer users at work change windows or check e-mail or other programs nearly 37 times an hour, new research shows. By connecting information to a social layer, and putting filters and permissions in place for employees to consume that information, we can help employees manage this data explosion. Meanwhile, we can also save money. Rather than train people on how to use a more complex HR or document management system, we can deliver relevant information into their activity streams or widgets on their personalized intranet homepage. Last but not the least, the social intranet's follows the principle of Wikipedia's "Wisdom of Crowds - 1990" rule. Out of 100 people, 1 person creates a document, 9 people edit the document and 90 people view the documents. This is very true in our case and we have seen this trend developing and providing us great business value and benefits.