

Shire Pharmaceuticals Global Specialty Biopharmaceutical Company Speeds Time -to-Market with EPM Solution

Shire Pharmaceuticals, a global specialty biopharmaceutical company, lacked consistent project and resource planning methods, which hindered decision making. To address that need, Shire deployed the Microsoft® Office Enterprise Project Management (EPM) Solution with help from Accenture, Microsoft Services, and Project Widgets. The solution was customized to include automated project creation using standardized templates, resource-forecasting algorithms, schedule-variance reporting, and a convenient Microsoft Office Excel® interface for specific users. With the EPM Solution, Shire can now meet its strategic milestones more consistently, plan its resources more accurately, manage change proactively, and provide key leaders across the organization with consolidated, critical information to support decision making.

Situation

Shire Pharmaceuticals helps people with life-altering conditions to lead better lives. The biopharmaceutical company focuses on meeting the needs of the specialist physician, ultimately helping patients and families around the world. Areas of specialization for Shire include attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders (ADHD), human genetic therapies (HGT), and gastrointestinal (GI) diseases. With primary sites in the United Kingdom and the United States, Shire has 2,400 employees.

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Chris Beck
Vice President, Program Resources and Decision Support
Shire

Shire realizes that strong business performance is based on sound project and resource management. “With the continued increase in the amount of time and resources required to successfully develop and commercialize a drug, it’s important that we use whatever tools and information we have to improve and optimize our ability to make sound investment decisions,” says Carrie Frey, Senior Vice President, Global Strategic Planning and Program Management at Shire.

In 2007 the company began to search for a methodology to improve its project and resource management practices. “At the time, project plans across the organization lived in different environments,” says Chris Beck, Vice President, Program Resources and Decision Support at Shire. Some employees created plans using Microsoft™ Office Project Professional 2003 on their desktop. Others used Microsoft Office Excel™ spreadsheet software. Some people even wrote plans on the back of an envelope.

Shire began to define its goals for project and resource management. The first priority was to develop sound project and schedule management, with the ultimate aim of reducing the time -to-market for products. Equally important, the company needed to put the tools in place to support sound resource allocation decisions.

“Once we know that a piece of work is going to take a specific number of resources over time, the harder question is, can we absorb it? And if we can’t absorb it, how big is the gap? What work is competing for those same resources at that exact same time?” says Beck. These are difficult questions because, says Beck, “They require you to keep a constant pulse on the ongoing work and on the resources that are being consumed by that work—work that is changing constantly.”

Before implementing the project management solution, Shire made decisions about whether to assume new projects largely based on strategic fit and return on investment (ROI) assessments. The company did not have sufficient tools or timely data to take human resources into proper consideration.

Additionally, Shire’s matrix operating model requires a seamless and well-orchestrated flow of timeline and resource information. In order to realize the benefits of this model, both components of the matrix, functional

areas and business units, need to be in sync regarding the prioritization of activities, milestone dates, and resource allocation.

Solution

Shire selected the Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management (EPM) Solution, which includes Microsoft Office Project Server 2007, Office Project Professional 2007, and Office Project Web Access. With the EPM Solution, Shire would be able to achieve integration with existing Microsoft Office applications, and, where appropriate, customize aspects of the solution to take advantage of Office Excel as a familiar interface.

The company chose Accenture, Microsoft Services, and Project Widgets for design, implementation, and customization. The team worked alongside Shire to deploy a key requirement of the solution: "One of the main requirements Shire had was that project and resource planning be split functionally—managed separately—while staying synchronized behind the scenes," says Ira Brown, President and CEO of Project Widgets. "Shire wanted people in different roles within the company to be able to work within the same project without stepping on each other's activities. Employees in different parts of the business needed be able to work on their piece of the puzzle while the EPM Solution synchronization mechanisms kept related plans coordinated."

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The EPM Solution at Shire consists of two main components: one for schedule planning and management, which is owned by program managers and functional schedule owners; and the other for human resource estimation, which is owned by resource planners and managers.

For scheduling, program managers create integrated project plans that correspond to a particular drug in development. These high-level plans, which may have a lifespan of 8 to 10 years, generate associated resource plans and link to smaller detailed project plans that correspond to activities such as clinical trials, supply chain management, and regulatory filing. Plans stay synchronized through customization behind the scenes.

A key requirement of the solution was that it be simple to understand, use, and maintain for all types of Shire employees. Individuals in non-project-management roles did not want to have to learn new software and become technical project management experts. For example, the regulatory group managed all regulatory filing milestones in Office Excel; they wanted to be able to continue to use an Office Excel-like interface, because it was easy and intuitive for them. Using custom views, the Shire regulatory group could use the EPM Solution in the Excel-like format the group desired.

For resourcing, functional area line managers create resource plans, which are standardized Microsoft Office Project plans with an Office Excel interface. The Excel interface captures key information and demand drivers that increase or decrease workload. As the project owners of the detailed resource plans open their projects, these plans automatically reflect the latest updates to corresponding master timelines—for example, users can see if clinical trials were added or deleted.

Shire can create many different types of reports—from cross-functional executive summary reports to quarterly variance reports, which are based on a previous month's snapshot and highlight changes since last quarter.

The EPM Solution at Shire includes key customizations. For example, Project Widgets created a custom project initiation wizard for building a new project. The wizard ensures that all fields are populated and correct templates are used. Other enhancements include standard resource templates or algorithms that incorporate resource estimates into plans based on activity complexity levels specified by users.

Benefits

With the Microsoft Office EPM Solution, Shire can meet its timelines more consistently, improve its use of resources, plan for change proactively, and synchronize work across the business.

Meet Strategic Milestones Consistently

Because Shire Pharmaceuticals now has the visibility to make optimal planning decisions, it can set and meet product milestones more consistently. "With the EPM Solution, the transparency of schedule changes has increased dramatically, and we discuss these quarterly to assess the rationale and impact of these changes," says Beck. This visibility ensures that slipping a milestone date is the last resort.

Plan Resources More Accurately

Like many pharmaceutical companies, Shire typically has more work than resources. This means senior leadership has to make trade-off decisions on a regular basis: do this project, slow this project down, don't do that project. Previously, Shire made those trade-off decisions without solid resource information, which meant that in some cases the functional areas had to scramble to resource new projects.

The EPM Solution provides a comprehensive view of Shire Research and Development (R&D) and supply chain resource needs. It generates resource estimations based on user-specified project complexity levels—high, medium, and low. Shire has a much more accurate view of its resource needs and the impact of changes to existing work. The company uses this information to develop sound recruiting and outsourcing strategies.

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Senior Manager, Program Resources and Decision Support
Shire

For example, a functional leader can create a report illustrating that in the first quarter of 2010 there will be a need for 20 more people, giving the resource managers enough lead time to plan. The same report might also show that by the second quarter of 2010, that resource spike declines, and only three additional people will be needed. With this information, managers need not hire 20 full-time employees just to let the majority of them go in six months; they can hire three full-time employees and outsource the remaining 17.

"The EPM Solution helps us to orchestrate rational, deliberate, and well-informed resource allocation decisions proactively, rather than in crisis mode. It gives us the ability to formulate optimal staffing and outsourcing strategies," says Beck.

Manage Change Proactively

Mary Rose Keller, Vice President of Global Clinical Development at Shire, says, "The norm for the drug development businesses is constant flux. Project activities continuously change in an unpredictable way, while we are expected to respond immediately. By connecting the scope of work represented in our Clinical Trial Management System to the EPM Solution, we have a long-range view of resource needs that can be managed in real time with minimal effort. Furthermore, we can easily produce 'what if' scenarios to aid in decision making to help drive desired outcomes."

Shire employees from all areas of the business now discuss changes to projects openly and productively thanks to the quarterly Authoritative Record of Work (ARoW) review meeting and the ARoW variance report produced by the EPM Solution. "We no longer need to spend half a day going over schedules line by line," says Beck. "The ARoW variance report tells us what's changed since the timelines were last approved." The ARoW variance report quickly evolved, so that Shire now discusses only the variances that have a high impact. "With the EPM Solution ARoW variance reports, our ability to focus on critical changes has made our quarterly dialogues much more efficient," says Beck.

Shire also assesses the rationale for milestone changes: “Why did this change happen?” The company has seven categories for rationale: modified strategy, regulatory agency input, internal capacity challenge, budget deferral, cross-functional dependency, execution challenge, and execution effectiveness. By categorizing each variance, Shire can look for historical patterns and take corrective measures so that future programs will have fewer schedule variances.

Synchronize Work Across the Business

Prior to the EPM Solution, Shire didn't have a good mechanism for the business units and functional areas to communicate resource needs and milestone variances to each other. The EPM Solution helped Shire to bridge these two sides of the organization.

Maureen Martini, Senior Manager, Program Resources and Decision Support at Shire, was the project lead for the design and implementation of the EPM Solution. She says, “The integration of resource scheduling and capacity planning, combined with separate ownership, has value that spans the entire organization. The EPM Solution serves the strategic and operational needs of four primary constituents: business units, functional areas, product teams, and governance bodies.”

Ease of use plays a key role in the company's ability to manage the organization intelligently. This was one of the main reasons Shire chose the Microsoft Office EPM Solution. “The solution lets both sides of the organization approach their tasks in the way that makes the most sense for them,” says Beck. “Its user-friendly, intuitive, adaptable interface simplifies the user experience, so employees are more likely to keep plans up to date.”

Beck concludes, “The EPM Solution enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of our matrix operating model by providing timely information needed to make optimal product, portfolio, and capacity-planning decisions.”