

MEDSEEK

eHealth Solutions Provider Standardizes Deployments, Improves Resource Management

Alabama-based MEDSEEK provides more than 600 healthcare organizations with Web portal technologies and consulting services to connect physicians, patients, employees, and consumers. As its projects increased in number and complexity, project managers lacked a comprehensive view into resources, schedules, and status. To solve this problem, MEDSEEK teamed with Project Hosts to implement an on-demand 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, MEDSEEK can set more accurate client expectations and establish successful, repeatable delivery processes. It also helps the company meet milestones, proactively address slips, and manage and distribute resources intelligently.

Situation

Based in Birmingham, Alabama, MEDSEEK provides healthcare organizations with enterprise eHealth solutions to fully engage and strengthen relationships with physicians, patients, employees, and consumers. The company's comprehensive technology platform and strategic consulting services provide the infrastructure and thought leadership for hospitals to deliver powerful Web portal solutions. With more than 10 years of experience and more than 600 customers, MEDSEEK has the expertise to meet the diverse needs of the healthcare community. In addition to its Alabama headquarters, the company has offices in California and Mississippi. It employs more than 140 people.

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MEDSEEK grew significantly in late 2006 and began to look for an enterprise tool that would provide a centralized view of its many high-value projects. The company had recently merged with another company, which multiplied the number of offerings it managed and sold. With disparate reporting through Microsoft® Office Excel® 2003 spreadsheet software and Microsoft Office Word 2003, MEDSEEK did not have a comprehensive view of its commitments.

"With the merger came the management of multiple eHealth portals and the need to have an enterprise view to strategically assess and manage them," says Donna DiCristina, Head of Operations Knowledge Management at MEDSEEK. "The company merger was wonderful from a business perspective, but it also created some complexity around trying to reconcile different processes and deployment standards." In addition, the company expanded its consulting practice while it began to sell larger, broader-based solutions. "We introduced program management with our larger scale deployments and needed a tool that would help us understand the scope and complexity of our commitments as a whole, including: What projects are in the pipeline? What is their status? When are they due to launch or complete? Are there issues? Where and when do we have resources for new projects?" says Rich Grehalva, Senior VP of Professional Services at MEDSEEK.

MEDSEEK saw an enterprise project management (EPM) tool as an opportunity to have more consistent deployments across the organization. "We wanted to make sure that if clients purchased an eHealth portal from us and then later came back to purchase additional products or services, that they would have the same experience with us: their project deployments would be similar, and they would get similar status reports. We wanted to make sure that they would know what to expect from us from a delivery perspective," says DiCristina.

Ultimately, says DiCristina, "We really wanted to understand the efforts involved in our processes so that we could fine-tune them, report on them, note trends, and replicate our successes."

Solution

MEDSEEK worked with Microsoft Gold Certified Partner Project Hosts to implement an on -demand 30-day trial deployment of Microsoft Office Project Server 2007 in January 2007. MEDSEEK was inte rested in Project Hosts because of its experience with the Microsoft Office EPM Solution. By using the company's hosted service model, MEDSEEK implemented the EPM Solution quickly and cost -effectively. "That was absolutely the right decision and the right way to go," says DiCristina. "Project Hosts has been very, very helpful and provided the secure, reliable, high-performance IT infrastructure we needed for our EPM deployment; and, we were thrilled at not having to deal with the ins and outs of the technology. It was a very good decision—we've been very pleased with Project Hosts."

In choosing the EPM Solution, DiCristina, a Project Management Professional (PMP) certified through the Project Management Institute (PMI), weighed her knowledge of PMI processe s and standards with company needs. "It was a matter of marrying the software business objectives with the healthcare business objectives and finding a tool that could reconcile these with project management best practices," she says. "After evaluating another solution that did not meet our needs, we found that the Microsoft Office EPM Solution had a lot of the specific features we needed. For example, we wanted to be able to track and manage project proposals, as well as track administrative and non -project tasks using timesheets. Those two pieces were important to us."

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After the 30-day trial phase, the companies deployed the on -demand EPM Solution on a wider scale. MEDSEEK completed a "train the trainer" session in March 2007 and conducted a pilot deployment between March and May 2007. Upon successful completion of the pilot, MEDSEEK began to deploy the solution companywide in early June. All employees involved with a client deployment or product development —such as product managers, quality assurance employees, engineers, designers, and c onsultants—use the EPM Solution. Project managers use Microsoft Office Project Professional 2007 to manage individual projects, and others use Microsoft Office Project Web Access. The EPM Solution provides MEDSEEK with a solution to manage, prioritize, and deliver projects and resources in alignment with its business objectives.

Benefits

By using the Microsoft Office EPM Solution, the MEDSEEK sales team can offer more accurate project scheduling and forecasting to clients and prospects. The company now has a methodology to establish successful, repeatable delivery processes. MEDSEEK can also meet milestones and proactively address slips, while it manages and distributes resources more intelligently.

Set Accurate Client Expectations

MEDSEEK uses the EPM Solution to provide prospects and clients with accurate scheduling and forecasting. "As we were in the sales cycle and working with our prospects that would ultimately become clients, they were always asking when they could have deliverables and what our tim eline looked like," says DiCristina. "We really wanted to educate and empower our sales team so that they could structure and set expectations with clients around timelines and processes. The Microsoft Office EPM Solution supports us in successfully meetin g our client delivery commitments."

Establish Successful, Repeatable Delivery Processes

The company can better track its products' development cycles. "The EPM Solution helps MEDSEEK standardize and fine-tune its releases and deployments so that we can replicate processes and repeat successes," says DiCristina.

Meet Milestones and Proactively Address Slips

MEDSEEK can consistently meet project milestones because, says DiCristina, "The EPM Solution gives our executives a dashboard view of our projects with red, green, and yellow stop lights." MEDSEEK has implemented several project indicators that display a project's status at any given time. "We have significantly increased our project status visibility with the EPM Solution.

The company can now set more achievable project milestones and proactively address any issues that arise. "We have total company involvement—from executive management all the way down, everybody views the same project schedules," says DiCristina. "If we notice that there's a slip or an anticipated slip, we get together to review it and understand the source of the delay." The EPM Solution shows MEDSEEK that next level of understanding to see what happens behind project plans. "We include client tasks in our status reports, showing the impact of date changes to milestones. This lets us have more timely and informed conversations with clients about the trickle effect of schedule changes and late deliverables," says DiCristina.

Manage and Distribute Resources Intelligently

Prior to implementing the EPM Solution, MEDSEEK resource managers found it difficult to know who was assigned to each project and which tasks occupied employee time. "Individual styles and reporting tools made this very challenging," says DiCristina. Templates and the timesheet reporting in Office Project Server 2007 help MEDSEEK understand which activities consume employee time. "Project Server 2007 timesheets immediately became a valuable tool from an informational perspective, from assigning resources to internal development. We've gained a very clear understanding of how much time employees are spending in specific areas."