

The Linc group
Facilities Management Company Saves Money and Cuts Project Management Time in Half

The Linc Group (Linc) provides facilities management and building system services to more than 100,000 customers in 45 states and internationally. Linc cost-effectively maintains and improves building facilities for its clients, maximizing energy efficiencies, and optimizing operations. Linc has thousands of internal and external projects running concurrently and needed an effective, homogenous system for managing them and tracking progress. Linc worked with Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner, LMR Solutions (LMR) to implement Microsoft Office Project Server 2007. After a smooth implementation, the solution was deployed to 350 employees within six months. Office Project Server 2007 has saved Linc time and money, improved employee collaboration and customer service, and provided Linc with an efficient way to evaluate employees fairly.

Situation

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Greg Lush
Vice President and Chief Information Officer
The Linc Group

The Linc Group (Linc) provides facilities management and building services through its business units and franchises. Linc is headquartered in Irvine, California, and employs 3,450 people. The company offers on-site facility operations and management services, mobile HVAC preventative maintenance service programs, lighting and electrical services, and bundled energy solutions, in addition to individual projects commissioned by customers. Linc provides services to over 100,000 clients representing over 300 million square feet. Notable Linc clients include the JFK International Airport, Glaxo-Smith Kline, and Andrews Air Force Base.

Linc has multiple business units, 24 company stores throughout the United States, and 134 franchisees. This decentralization makes it possible for Linc to provide on-site localized services to a large number of locations. However, it also makes employee collaboration and centralized tracking of projects difficult. Also, managers needed additional tools to perform effective employee evaluations. A big challenge for Linc was providing its distributed workforce with the tools they needed to communicate, accomplish projects, and achieve the level of customer service that Linc clients expect.

Linc initiates approximately a thousand new projects each month. The company was using Microsoft® Office Groove™ software and Excel® spreadsheet software to track and manage these projects. However, these tools, while valuable, were not sufficiently fulfilling the company's project management needs, and employees were still spending a lot of time following up on the status of projects. What the company needed was a clear, centralized view of how projects were progressing and a way to determine individual employee contributions.

Solution

In February 2007, Linc teamed with Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, LMR Solutions (LMR), to implement Microsoft Office Project Server 2007. "We chose Office Project Server 2007 because it is already integrated out of the box and that's what is important to us," says Greg Lush, Vice President and Chief Information Officer at Linc. Office Project Server 2007 provides project managers with a set of tools to effectively manage projects of any size, including the correct allocation of people, money, and materials. Office Project Server 2007 works with its clients Microsoft Office Project Professional 2007 and Microsoft Office Project Web Access.

LMR proposed that Linc use its SMART EPM program in conjunction with Office Project Server 2007. SMART EPM is a customized program that provides best-practice services and configurations for enterprise project management solutions. LMR held a strategy workshop in February 2007 to assess the business requirements. A determination was made to use Office Project Server 2007 as it was built —without special configurations. The implementation went smoothly. "It was really quick —around a month of assessment, installation, and training. Linc has been running with the solution since May 2007," says Mark Virnig, Senior Project Management Consultant at LMR.

There are approximately 350 Linc employees and partners using Office Project Server 2007. The Microsoft solution is being used to manage 90 percent of all internal corporate projects and a growing number of external projects. Linc will continue to work with LMR to expand its use of Office Project Server 2007. "Our technical depth with the solution allows LMR to understand the business needs of Linc and to develop a comprehensive roadmap for the company," says Virnig.

Benefits

"Team members on projects are saving 50–60 percent of their time due to Office Project Server 2007. They spend less time tracking tasks and more time actually performing them."

Sandra Smith
Program Manager Financial Management Group
The Linc Group

Office Project Server 2007 saves Linc time and money, and has proven to be reliable. It also gives Linc an efficient way to evaluate employees accurately and provides enhanced customer service. Additionally, because Office Project Server 2007 is easy to learn and use, its benefits are immediately apparent, which results in ready acceptance by Linc vendors, partners and employees.

Money Savings

Office Project Server 2007 provides greater visibility and facilitates employee collaboration by providing a forum for centralized tracking and modifications, both of which lead directly to cost savings.

Using one project as an example: Linc had 18 team members distributed throughout the United States working on a project. The project was managed with Office Project Server 2007 and had a life cycle of three months and 1800 hours total. Each team member billed out at \$175 dollars an hour for his or her work on this project. Linc estimates that the elimination of some of the time employees spent tracking the project combined with the increased accuracy of information and visibility provided by Office Project Server 2007 saved it 500 employee hours. This resulted in a money savings of \$8,755.00 dollars. "We saved 500 hours on this project alone. I will have earned back the fee paid to use Office Project Server 2007 on this project 40 times over by the time we are finished," says Lush. When the solution is fully deployed at the Business Units, Linc will initiate approximately a thousand new projects monthly.

Linc has grown exponentially over the last four years due to acquisitions. Integration of the employees from the acquired companies has been streamlined with Office Project Server 2007. This level of integration and subsequent employee collaboration saves Linc money as a company and results in tangible financial benefits. "The financial people can't believe it. They audit our books and say that EBIDTA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization) cannot grow at a better rate than your revenue in a heavy merger and

acquisition environment. But I say, oh yes, it can. It's because of the efficiencies we build in with our collaborative environment. And Office Project Server 2007 is right there in the middle of it," says Lush.

Improved Employee Efficiency

Office Project Server 2007 saves Linc time and increases employee collaboration by providing a centralized location for project modifications and comments. Supervisors have one-stop access to a complete overview of the project giving them the tools to manage initiatives efficiently and effectively. Employees and partners are able to log into Office Project Server 2007 and see the complete history of a project. "Team members on projects are saving 50–60 percent of their time due to Office Project Server 2007. They spend less time tracking tasks and more time actually performing them," says Sandra Smith, Program Manager, Financial Management Team at the Linc Information Management Group.

The solution also saves the Linc management team time, because they can access and review projects easily and trust the information they see—obviating the need for time-consuming follow-up. "We have unbelievable visibility of what's going on in the corporation and that's all because of Office Project Server 2007. I'd say we save 60–65 percent in straight efficiency and 85 percent of rework because we trust the data is accurate," says Lush.

Additionally, projects can be handed off within the organization at a fraction of the time they used to be, allowing for employees to easily contribute to projects. "Before it would have taken me over two weeks to gather all of the required information to get up to speed on this project. With Office Project Server 2007, it took me two hours," says Smith.

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Greg Lush
Vice President and Chief Information Officer
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Better Customer Service

Linc has improved its customer service using Office Project Server 2007 and gained repeat business. Linc represents itself as being one of the most technologically savvy facilities management companies on the market, and its customers expect Linc to live up to that promise. Office Project Server 2007 helps the company to do so. Specifically, a Linc project manager recently ran a facilities project through Office Project Server 2007. He added the customer's project team to the site providing them with complete oversight. All work—including issues, risks, product documentation, and review cycles,—was tracked through Office Project Server 2007. "Office Project Server 2007 allowed the project to be managed so smoothly that another company in the building was impressed and awarded Linc additional projects," says Lush.

Accurate Employee Evaluations

Office Project Server 2007 gives an instant overview of all contributions by team members on projects. It is easy to determine who is doing what and when they are doing it. Team members who are always on task and complete their benchmarks accurately and on time will stand out due to the screen views on Office Project Server 2007 and vice-versa. Linc can use this information to make informed, effective choices when it comes to promotions and employee feedback. "We absolutely get better insight into the productivity of employees with Office Project Server 2007. Our customers expect us to do what we say we're going to do and be able to prove it. We expect the same from our employees. Office Project Server 2007 tracks all progress and fills the gaps," says Lush.

Office Project Server 2007 also gives project managers the necessary tools to determine employee work loads. "With Office Project Server 2007, we'll get a better understanding of not only how effective employees are but also how loaded people are on projects and initiatives," says Lush. This accurate view of individual employee workloads results in better use of existing resources.

Ease of Use and Implementation

Office Project Server 2007 was easy to implement and provided immediate benefits. "Our partner, LMR, stood it up, and it worked like a top, straight out of the box, just like Microsoft advertises," says Lush.

Also, because Office Project Server 2007 is easy to use, employees adopted it quickly. Even partners are using it. "A partner doesn't have to use Office Project Server 2007, I can't force them. However, they see what a dramatic difference it makes and what a good tool it is, and they are using it. It has really helped my job. I save at least six hours a week being able to see what our partners are doing at any given time without having to send out constant 'Can you please update?' e-mail messages," says Smith.