



“With our dynamic and growing environment, we needed a way to communicate with our employees as well as allow them to work together from anywhere in the world... (SharePoint) was the perfect fit.”

*Ed Flavin
Director of IT
MODEC*



MODEC

Industry: Offshore Oil Services

HQ: Houston, Texas

Problem: How to facilitate collaboration, document management, and centralization of business knowledge between geographically dispersed employees and business partners.

Solution: Microsoft SharePoint

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Accudata Systems Improves Intranet, Extranet, and File Sharing at MODEC with Microsoft SharePoint Portal Server 2003

THE CHALLENGE

Collaboration, document management, and centralization of business knowledge represent a fundamental challenge to many companies in today's business environment. In many cases, organizations address this challenge by implementing a variety of solutions that are decentralized, complicated to manage, and counterintuitive. These varied approaches can lead to significant productivity losses due to the inefficiencies involved in managing and using multiple systems.

When MODEC — a global corporation that provides project management, engineering, procurement, construction, installation and operation services to the offshore oil industry — decided to address their need for a single but comprehensive collaboration solution, they engaged Accudata Systems, Inc. (ASI) in February, 2006 to assess the feasibility of implementing Microsoft SharePoint Portal Server 2003.

“ASI completed several large projects with MODEC prior to this engagement, including an Active Directory Migration from Novell NetWare and GroupWise to Microsoft Active Directory and Exchange Server 2003,” said Rob Iutzwig, Enterprise Platforms Consultant for Accudata Systems. MODEC's rapid expansion in 2006 presented new challenges in terms of collaboration and knowledge sharing among individuals, teams, and business partners. ASI's previous experience and track record of success with MODEC made them the ideal partner to address this new challenge.

THE SOLUTION

MODEC engaged ASI to design and deliver a SharePoint Portal Server 2003 intranet/extranet to address the challenges they faced. The goals for the project were to implement a farm architecture that would provide MODEC with:

- Custom portal graphics
- Project sites
- Document management
- Extensive backup/disaster recovery capabilities
- Custom InfoPath forms
- Employee directory tied directly to Active Directory
- Intranet access for employees in the US, Japan, Brazil, and Singapore locations
- Extranet access to specific portal sites for business partners outside the organization

To achieve these goals, several phases of the project were necessary:

1. Architecture and Design
2. Creation of Production and Development Portal Environments
3. Marketing
4. Content Delivery
5. Intranet Production Deployment
6. Extranet Planning and Design

The Architecture and Design phase consisted of many efforts, including defining organizational goals, developing infrastructure diagrams, estimating the total number of users, determining server hardware, identifying storage requirements, factoring potential growth into the design, and discussing implementation strategies.

The next phase of the project was concerned with the creation of production and development portal environments. "As in many organizations, MODEC required the ability to perform development and testing prior to production deployment. To address this requirement, an identical Virtual Server environment was created based on VMWare Server," stated lutzwig. Once the production and test environments were in place, it was time to give the portal a face-lift.

The Marketing phase transformed the common SharePoint look and feel into a unique portal design that was aesthetically pleasing, yet conservative. The final result: a completely customized portal with custom graphics, custom colors, drop-down menus, and a consistent theme. In order to achieve a standardized color scheme across the portal, cascading style sheets were customized to affect a global change.

The fourth phase of the project was focused on content delivery. This effort involved creating portal content for various departments within the organization. "In addition to your typical departmental sites, there was a requirement to create project bid proposal sites to allow team members to collaborate and share documents within a centralized area. SharePoint was the ideal solution for this scenario," added lutzwig. Custom InfoPath forms were also a part of this phase. Several company forms were created in InfoPath and deployed to the portal. As more and more forms are converted from paper to electronic, MODEC will realize a cost savings because of these streamlined processes. Moreover, maintaining version control over forms will no longer be an issue.

The fifth phase of the project dealt with the production deployment of the intranet portal. This phase involved extensive communication and coordination between the IT department and several other departments within the organization, especially those for which sites were developed. In addition, many measures were taken to ensure the reliability of the service such as tape backups, T-SQL backup jobs, and custom SharePoint backup scripts. Disaster recovery drills were also performed to ensure that recovery efforts would succeed.

The final phase was comprised of the planning and design of MODEC's extranet. "MODEC needed its outside vendors to be able to collaborate with MODEC

employees on projects and proposals. Deploying SharePoint as an extranet was an excellent solution," stated lutzwig. "There are many concerns around the area of security when it comes to an extranet environment. Utilizing Microsoft 'best practices,' we were able to create a highly-secure extranet environment that allowed MODEC to further improve their business processes and realize added efficiencies."

THE RESULTS

The introduction of the intranet portal at MODEC has had a profound impact on the organization. The idea of having a central area for teams to share ideas, knowledge, and strategies, has benefited the company immensely by storing content in a centralized environment that is accessible from MODEC's domestic and international locations. Employees now have relevant information at their fingertips rather than scattered across local hard drives, file shares, and e-mail inboxes.

"SharePoint allows for the collection of metadata when saving documents in the portal. This information is then stored in an SQL database and indexed for enhanced searching capabilities. The end result is that you can search an entire portal with thousands of documents in a matter of seconds.

*Rob lutzwig
Enterprise Platforms Consultant
Accudata Systems*

Not only is the portal intuitive and simple to navigate, but search capabilities allow for even greater flexibility in finding documents. "SharePoint allows for the collection of metadata when saving documents to the portal. This information is then stored in an SQL database and indexed for enhanced searching capabilities," stated lutzwig. "The end result is that you can search an entire portal with thousands of documents in a matter of seconds."

The momentum for SharePoint Portal Server is growing within MODEC. Efforts to expand the portal to outside business partners are currently underway. With the recent purchase of an External Connector license from Microsoft, as well as hardware for their extranet DMZ deployment, MODEC is committed to SharePoint as a critical solution in addressing their information-sharing needs.