



Houston Texans Improve Intranet User Experience with Catapult Systems



SharePoint empowers effective document management and workflows

The Houston Texans' intranet was developed in 2004 using SharePoint 2003, then the most advanced technology available. While the intranet met the company's needs at the time, as the organization grew and evolved, its intranet needed to change too.

Like many organizations, the Texans' intranet was laden with forms used to facilitate daily business, such as vacation requests, collateral requests and purchase orders. Requests were completed using Microsoft Word, Excel or PDF forms and then routed via email or interoffice mail. This manual process prevented users from tracking the progress of their requests, while restricting senior management's visibility into the number and status of requests being processed.

Navigation was also an issue. The existing intranet had limited branding capabilities and was inconsistent with the Texans' redesigned Internet site, making navigation confusing. Further complicating matters, the intranet employed an older navigational scheme that made it difficult for users to drill down into the site.

The Texans planned to upgrade the intranet to Microsoft SharePoint Server 2007 to obtain new workflow capabilities and more intuitive navigational and branding options, such as rights trimming. The Texans selected Catapult to help identify the best way to leverage SharePoint's capabilities due to Catapult's expertise with SharePoint and its familiarity with the Texans' environment.

How Catapult Systems Helped

The Texans' IT team knew that migrating to SharePoint 2007 would enable it to meet demands for new functionality from users and management. An expert in Microsoft technology, Catapult Systems was brought in to create a plan for a new Texans intranet

that leveraged the new features in SharePoint 2007. Catapult began by conducting envisioning sessions to help flesh-out project requirements.

During the envisioning sessions, Catapult discovered that the complexity of the Texans' business processes could not be accomplished with SharePoint Server 2007 out-of-the-box, or even SharePoint Designer. Catapult suggested that rather than designing custom workflows with Visual Studio, the Texans could employ K2 BlackPearl to create the workflows.

The K2 product integrates tightly with Microsoft products to enable companies to develop new workflows and change existing workflows much more quickly and easily than developing workflows directly from Windows Workflow Foundation. "Catapult's previous experience with K2 was invaluable. They knew how to work together with K2 to respond to our unique challenges and situation in the most efficient way," said Jeff Schmitz, Texans' IT Director.

The team began building the intranet by migrating the existing content onto a new SharePoint 2007 server and database. Catapult then worked with the Texans to create workflows using K2 for purchase orders, vacation requests and product collateral requests by converting the Word, Excel and PDF forms into InfoPath forms.

The new automated requests now move through an approval process which automatically routes them to the next step in the workflow. In addition to streamlining requests, SharePoint 2007 enables management and end users to track the number and status of requests.

“End-user response to our new intranet has been amazing. The new workflows have a very high acceptance level. They love the new look, feel and consistency between our external and internal Web sites, which has greatly improved usability. Now we can maximize the information we offer to our employees.”

Jeff Schmitz | Director of IT, Houston Texans

The second challenge addressed in the upgrade was aligning the intranet and Internet branding. SharePoint 2003 provided limited options for developing the look and feel of Web sites. Catapult Systems used SharePoint 2007's new branding options to improve the site's user experience. Finally, the issues around the intranet's navigational scheme employed in the intranet were resolved with SharePoint 2007's enhanced navigational technology, which enabled the addition of drill down menus, breadcrumbs and search capabilities to the site. The resulting changes to the intranet greatly improved accessibility, allowing users to locate information more quickly and easily.

The upgrade to SharePoint 2007 also enabled other improvements to the intranet, transforming the site from a static data location to an easy-to-use, interactive tool. Users are now empowered to post their own content, and new tools for delivering valuable information, such as RSS feeds, have been added.

Results

- Consistency created by integrating the intranet and internet has made the user experience more intuitive.
- Improved navigational scheme and search functionality make it easier for users to locate information.
- Limited burden on IT by implementing third-party software to create and maintain workflows.
- Using workflows to route electronic forms has reduced paper and email usage and reduced errors from manual form processing.
- Improved visibility into request volume and status has improved management control and enabled historical data tracking.
- Users are now empowered to post information to the intranet, and new ways to distribute information, such as RSS feeds of local news, provide more ways for users to consume maximum information within a single site.



How can we help you?

Contact us at 1-800-528-6248 or info@CatapultSystems.com