



EHRlich PEST CONTROL

SharePoint Allows Ehrlich Pest Control to Shave Considerable Time Off Their Software Change Management Process

With the implementation of Microsoft® SharePoint by Weidenhammer Systems (www.hammer.net), Ehrlich Pest Control (www.jcehrlich.com) has significantly improved how they coordinate requests for program changes, schedule and assign resources, and collaborate at all levels of the IT change management process. This has provided a savings of between two and three hours per day for their Systems Resource Analyst with additional savings for all involved parties. In addition, this solution has provided a mechanism to comply with Sarbanes-Oxley for IT Change Management. This process has worked so well for Ehrlich's AS400 IT projects that it is also being implemented for their networking projects.

Collaboration is a key component in most major project changes. As projects begin to grow and the amount of input and contributions from various key stakeholders expands, the need to effectively manage this process is of paramount importance. Between dividing up the workload and gaining appropriate approvals along the way, it's important to know where each project stands at all times.

Ehrlich Pest Control, headquartered in Reading, Pennsylvania, understands the value of collaboration. Ehrlich performs residential and commercial pest control, termite control, bird and bat control, vegetation management and bioremediation in commercial kitchens.

Founded in 1928, Ehrlich has enjoyed tremendous growth since their inception. They now occupy 43 local offices - serving the following states - Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, West Virginia, Ohio, Florida, Georgia, Illinois and Kansas, well as the District of Columbia. And like any company that has expanded, with that growth has come the need to improve and update a variety of processes and procedures.

Challenge

One Ehrlich process that required attention surrounded how they addressed their programming change requests. With a continual need to make programming updates, they would go through their appropriate internal approvals and then relay the information to Weidenhammer Systems (www.hammer.net), an information solutions company, who aggregates technology from the leading companies in the world, and delivers IT solutions to a wide range of companies.

Ehrlich had previously managed all of their programming projects through a typical Microsoft Word document, a series of e-mails, as well as paper versions of the documentation and necessary sign-off sheets. As each application system progressed, the supportive documentation continued to grow. Each change request required access to the appropriate design specifications and each contributor and approver would add notes and approvals, which were essential to the project process. The information was required but difficult to track. This was particularly noticeable during Ehrlich's weekly status meetings, when they would spend a great amount of time searching for the most up-to-date documentation.

While so many of Ehrlich's programming updates were lengthy and time consuming, bringing these updates to fruition, managing the project process, and gaining appropriate approvals was an extremely elongated and complicated process. As a result, Ehrlich turned to Microsoft SharePoint to make the process easier to administer and control.

In the past, when new programming projects were initiated, Ehrlich had an extensive process for requesting a project change, while gaining appropriate approvals, both within Ehrlich, and also from Weidenhammer. When changes were requested, the approval papers were routed through various members of Ehrlich's staff, before it came to Weidenhammer, where the project was designed, and an estimate provided. The documentation would then go back to Ehrlich, where once the estimate was approved, the assigned programmer needed to receive all the design specifications and all the programs that were impacted. This sheer quantity of documentation caused delays and opened the door for confusion. This also required a manual delivery process of all documents.

Solution

With Ehrlich's decision to go with Microsoft SharePoint, the program change request processes have been streamlined, expediting the amount of time required to bring programming projects to completion. Project requests are now easily entered into a SharePoint issues list, and assigned to the appropriate resource who receives an e-mail with a link to all the pertinent documentation. This is electronically routed and then authorized by the appropriate parties, eliminating a large amount of paper and activity that previously accompanied the approval process.

In addition, the amount of time spent researching a project's status has now been greatly reduced, thanks to SharePoint's robust searching capabilities. Through the creation of a variety of views, Ehrlich's projects are easily identifiable, including information such as who is working on them, a time stamp feature, and version control, ensuring contributors are working off the correct documents.

When executing these activities, members of the Ehrlich team can then route the document to appropriate staff members for internal review. Then, once members of the Ehrlich team approve the corresponding documentation, the same routed document packet of programming details are given to Weidenhammer where coders begin executing the updates.

After the final testing is complete, an implementation schedule is then created. Once the successful implementation is completed, all documentation remains in tact for reference in compliance with their Sarbanes-Oxley audit processes.

Results

With the SharePoint solution, Ehrlich has eliminated a vast amount of paper and coordination required for each project. In addition, Ehrlich is now able to quickly and easily view the status of any programming project, keeping the projects on schedule. The days of using Microsoft® Word to manually prepare a status document are long gone. Through the creation of essential views, the managed flow of documentation has saved roughly a week and a half of time during each programming project.

Additional benefits are felt when Ehrlich goes through the Sarbanes-Oxley auditing process, where SharePoint significantly simplifies their role. Previously, when auditors would arrive at Ehrlich, their staff would spend a tremendous amount of time gathering up all the necessary documentation. And because of the way Ehrlich files their programming documents, pieces were located in a variety of places. Now, with SharePoint, Ehrlich can simply provide their auditors with designated sign-on information, giving them

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access to the specific information they need, in a timely manner. This has shaved a significant amount of time from the overall auditing process.

While the time savings Ehrlich is currently enjoying speak volumes, SharePoint has brought a positive mindset to the entire Ehrlich staff. “With the overall visibility SharePoint has given us, we don’t need to monitor the project relentlessly,” remarked Annette Lee, Ehrlich’s Systems Resource Analyst. “I no longer fear taking a vacation or missing some days. I can quickly catch up and find out precisely where a given project stands, thanks to SharePoint.”

Ehrlich estimates SharePoint has saved in excess of two to three hours per day for Lee, as well as significant time for others. “Paper handling simply took up so much of our time,” remarked Lee. “During our weekly status meetings, we’d spend a great deal of time looking for information, trying to make sense of random, miscellaneous notes. We can now open a specific project and review all relative discussions, notes and documentation in a timeline fashion. Also SharePoint has versioning capabilities, so you can go back in time, so to speak, and see the state of a project at that time.”

Due to the time savings and stronger viewing capabilities, SharePoint also helps Lee in her decision making process. Changes can more easily be grouped and prioritized to match the strategic direction of the organization.

While SharePoint’s features have been effectively utilized by Ehrlich, Lee is excited to expand its uses in the future. “SharePoint is simple to use and while we’ve enjoyed many elements, we’d also like to add certain triggers that make elements, such as prioritization, even that much easier.”

Another main characteristic of SharePoint surrounds its ability for employees to stay in touch with projects. Ehrlich no longer depends on Lee’s availability to find out the status of a project. Employees can access the same information as well as set their own alerts for projects activity. This keeps all pertinent users up-to-date with all facets of the project.

Because SharePoint is a scalable document management solution, that promotes greater transparency and quicker reaction, as well as rapid access to information; there is a noticeable benefit with relation to Ehrlich’s work and decision-making quality. This collaborative effort benefits the entire organization.