

VirtualePM® (VePM) is a hosted, subscription based service that utilizes the Microsoft Enterprise Project Management platform. Microsoft EPM is ranked by Gartner as a leader in the Project Portfolio Management space. The solution is pre-configured with 'best-of-breed' reports, views and processes that enforce standardization and help organizations gain the visibility they need to manage enterprise resources, schedules and budgets. VePM's out-of-the box configuration was developed leveraging nearly 200 EPM implementations.



EasyLink Services International Corporation (EasyLink) is a leading provider of messaging services to thousands of companies from large enterprises to sole proprietorships around the world. Project Management had an immediate need for a solution that would provide visibility into resource capacity and utilization to help management plan and schedule the execution of its projects. Because time was a constraint, EasyLink determined implementing an on-demand Enterprise Project Management (EPM) system would be the ideal Solution. In May 2008, EasyLink went "Live" with VirtualePM® (VePM) , which is a RCM Technologies' Software -as-a-Service (SaaS) EPM system built on Microsoft Office Project Server 2007. Since then, EasyLink has reaped many of the benefits that VePM offers in terms of tracking project performance and resource management, and has gained widespread adoption within these two respective business units.

Situation

In early 2008, EasyLink went through an exercise to plan, develop and prioritize approximately 80 projects to be put into execution using Microsoft Office Project. At a high level, the company knew it did not have the resource capacity to start all 80 projects simultaneously. However, that was not the biggest challenge facing EasyLink. EasyLink needed a more detailed understanding of its resource capacity so it could carefully plan and schedule the start dates for all 80 projects. The company recognized it needed a central repository that captured resource capacity and utilization information, so it could better understand its resource constraints. By having that central repository of resource information in place, the company could assign priorities to all its projects and go through a 'leveling' exercise to evaluate schedule execution dates.

Solution

EasyLink needed a solution based on three basic criteria:

- 1) An on-demand solution so the company could go "Live" within a relatively short time frame
- 2) Built on Microsoft Office Project and Project Server 2007, which is the tool-of-choice for the company's project managers
- 3) Easy-to-use application the end-users could easily adopt

The company chose VePM because it specifically met those requirements. Because VePM comes built-in with best-of-breed configuration, EasyLink leveraged what was already pre-existing in the solution. Additionally, RCM provided end-user training for its project managers, team members and administrators prior to going "Live."



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~ Sarah Walker, QA & Project Management Manager
EasyLink Services

Benefits

By using VePM, EasyLink has better visibility into resource capacity and utilization, and project managers have more information when making resource assignments. According to Sarah Walker, QA and Project Management Manager at EasyLink, “Using the Enterprise Resource Pool is a huge benefit. Before, it was a manual process to get this type of visibility.” This visibility provides EasyLink with the capability to better manage the demand of its projects. The company can quickly see where the resource constraints are, and can take decisive and informed actions to navigate around these constraints. Additionally, EasyLink has the capability to review historical data to better estimate the work and/or duration of future projects.

There is more visibility and consistency in tracking project performance and gathering project metrics. EasyLink leveraged many of the existing custom project-level fields such as Project Class and Project Department, as well as created several more such as Prioritization Score and Project Weekly Variance that correspond to values that were previously difficult to track or attain. The company is using VePM as the ‘single source’ for tracking and measuring project performance. Walker says, “By using this tool, we’ve eliminated any sense of duplicity in reporting.” EasyLink now has access to project data by selecting one of several custom Project Center views such as PMO Report or Project Dashboard. Not only does EasyLink have more consistency in its data, project managers no longer have to devote so much time in pulling information together to create reports.

It’s not only project managers who are reaping the benefits; senior management has adopted VePM as well. Senior management recognizes the tool enables better decision making in setting the direction for the company. Every week, the project managers meet with their respective management teams to review the status of all projects. Walker says, “We use a LiveMeeting session, and just simply start walking through PWA.” In addition to the weekly status meetings, there is a monthly meeting to review projects that are currently underway and on hold. The project managers set up a custom Project Center view specifically for this meeting, and the team uses it to determine which projects are put into execution.

EasyLink is just beginning to realize the benefits VePM has to offer. As the company is finding success with the tool, it recognizes there are new project management challenges ahead. EasyLink has found an ideal partner in VePM and RCM in addressing these challenges.



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