

Time Tables

WINNING STRATEGIES
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For a 198 year-old company, DuPont keeps finding new ways to stay young.

One of its most recent rejuvenation plans involved pulling together all of its service organizations, such as human resources, sourcing, facility services, and engineering, and creating the Global Services Business (GSB). The GSB is charged with serving all of DuPont's business units and doing so as a lean and efficient organization - much like the business units it serves.

As a result, DuPont Engineering had to start acting like an independent company within the walls of its Wilmington, Del., headquarters. DuPont Engineering's 700 engineers had to become accountable for all of their engineering efforts. That meant that DuPont Engineering had to become 100 percent billable.

Dr. Jay Balder, demand manager for DuPont Engineering, was charged with accelerating DuPont Engineering's transformation into an in-house partner company to DuPont's strategic business units (SBUs). His goal was to position it as a preferred partner rather than simply a convenient and cost-effective supplier of engineering services to its internal customers.

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"The SBUs are not required to use our services. Some do maintain inside capabilities, and they can also use outside contractors," Balder says. "So we in GSB have to be competitive in a marketing sense. We don't have a captive customer base."

To prove the value offered by his engineers, he needed more details about the projects on which they were working. He also needed a project-tracking application that would give him the tool to collect the information effectively and convince internal customers that DuPont Engineering was a valuable partner organization.

He found his answer in an application based on Lotus Notes. Time Tracker from Automation Centre, a Lotus Premier Partner, gave him the reporting capabilities for which he was looking and in a format familiar to most of his engineers.



TIME'S ON THEIR SIDE

DuPont Engineering serves a variety of business units within the DuPont family. Some of its higher profile business units manufacture products used in the fabrication of clothes, countertops, and bullet-proof vests, just to name a few.

Balder describes its business activities as taking place in three main areas: engineering technology consulting, project planning and execution, and construction. Engineering technology consulting covers DuPont's technological expertise in a variety of areas, from heat transfer to construction materials. Project planning and execution involves the design of manufacturing facilities, and construction obviously covers the building of those capital projects.

With so much on the line, it's important for those DuPont businesses to know what they are getting for their money. "We are a demand-driven business," Balder says of DuPont Engineering. "That is why our customers need to understand what they are purchasing and what the cost is. That way they can select what they want to buy and what they may not want to buy."

Prior to the Time Tracker installation in March, DuPont engineers worked with a Digital VAX computer system. All it kept track of was the time allotment logged into the system by each engineer and the project number. That "time card" system, as Balder describes it, fed the information into DuPont's financial systems, which then sent reports to the business units.



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"If the only thing that we were providing them was cost information - the dollars - then all they would see is the overall cost, and that might set them on a path to think of ways to try and reduce that dollar amount," Balder says. "We had to get beyond the dollars."

That led DuPont Engineering to Automation Centre, which had an application for recording information and tracking hours worked by employees. The Time Tracker solution allows swift and easy time card submission, approval, and compilation of information. It also allows for slight configurations that fit DuPont Engineering's needs.

"Lotus Notes is great at collecting data. Time Tracker is great at reporting that data," says Steve Birchfield, president of Automation Centre. "So what we did was use Time Tracker to collect the data and push it into a Tracker data warehouse. Then we also pulled in accounting information from their legacy systems. From there, we generate Excel spreadsheet documents that deliver the final reports."

Balder says DuPont Engineering worked closely with Automation Centre to adjust some of the reporting fields. Now when internal customers read a Time Tracker based report, they know what engineers are doing for their business, what the engineering work is worth, and what the work costs. They can also find specific details on the engineering work and what person within the business unit originally specified the work.

"Once a month, engineers fill out the time sheet, and they include their project number and the hours. In addition, they actually write a description of what they did for the month," Balder says.

Time Tracker also includes a forecast feature. That gives the SBUs an idea of how much is left to be done on specific projects.

Once the report is pulled together from the Tracker data warehouse and the accounting systems, the Excel workbooks are posted to a Lotus Notes database. Those with the security credentials can access the reports via Lotus Notes on their PC.

TRANSPARENT PARTNER

"We want to be transparent to our customers. That means that we want them to know what we are doing," Balder says. "Because if they know, they will value what we are doing, and they won't linger on cost.

"Also, if they know what we are doing, and they don't value it and don't want us to do it, then we would like to know. That keeps us from doing work that the customer doesn't value," he says.

Balder believes he's winning the battle to position DuPont Engineering as a preferred partner that contributes to the overall well-being of the organization. He bases this assumption on the fact that when the engineering reports are posted late, he hears about it - loudly and quickly.

"That's a good indication of the value we bring to the customer," he says. ♦

HOW DID THEY DO THAT?

The many business units of DuPont heavily rely upon the cost reports provided by DuPont Engineering. Without them, they can't effectively analyze costs within their own businesses.

So the pressure not to disrupt the monthly distribution of cost reports among business units was tremendous. In fact, there could not be any disruption; the transition from the old "time card" system to the new Time Tracker application had to occur over one month, and it had to work.

Fortunately, DuPont Engineering, Automation Centre, the purveyor of Time Tracker, Andersen Consulting, DuPont Engineering's applications support provider, and Computer Sciences Corp., DuPont Engineering's hardware support provider, were confident they could meet the one-month installation time frame.

Training, however, posed a trickier dilemma. How do you train 700 engineers spread all over the world in a month's time?

Dr. Jay Balder elected to go the e-mail route. The implementation team e-mailed a PowerPoint presentation that walked engineers through the process of filling out a sample time sheet. He was confident that this simple demonstration would be enough, because the Time Tracker tool was based on Lotus Notes, an application already utilized by DuPont Engineering.

"One of the reasons that we selected Time Tracker is that it's a Notes application. We have engineers here in Wilmington, Del., and all over the world, and we needed an application that everyone had access to and that IT (information technology) had laid the groundwork for," Balder says. "Being a Lotus Notes product, Time Tracker is a perfect fit, because we didn't have to put any special software on people's desktops. They were already ready to go."

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