



Volvo Group Increases Project Visibility and Control While Saving Employees Time

Overview

Country or Region: Europe

Industry: Manufacturing—Automotive and industrial manufacturing

Customer Profile

The Volvo Group manufactures commercial vehicles, and it supplies other technologies and services. Based in Göteborg, Sweden, it has 90,000 employees.

Business Situation

The Volvo Group wanted to improve its resource management to accommodate its sophisticated time-reporting processes.

Solution

The Volvo Group implemented Microsoft Project Server 2010 and customized it to interact efficiently with other software such as Microsoft Visual Studio Team System 2008 Team Foundation Server.

Benefits

- Value-based capacity planning
- Time savings
- Simple user interface
- Quicker routes to visibility and control
- Clarified, transparent resource management

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The Volvo Group is a leading supplier of commercial and consumer transport solutions and customer financial services. Volvo IT, which provides solutions to the Group to manage its projects, wanted to improve employee efficiency by extending current resource management, time reporting, portfolio management, and other project management processes. The Volvo Group implemented Microsoft Project Server 2010 and made customizations to adapt to various internal processes and software applications. The Group is using Project Server 2010 to improve capacity planning to build its long-term strengths. Because of the customizations and the rich but simple user interface of the Microsoft Project Web App technology, the Volvo Group has cut the time spent entering project data by 40 percent. It also has improved project visibility and control, and can now provide more transparent resource management.

Situation

The Volvo Group produces commercial vehicles—such as Renault and Mack trucks and Volvo buses—and construction equipment. It also includes companies responsible for marine and aeronautical technologies, logistics, and financial services. With headquarters in Göteborg, Sweden, the Group has more than 90,000 global employees, production facilities in 19 countries, and sales activities in 180 countries. It had 2009 revenues of about SEK218 billion (U.S.\$29 billion).

Volvo IT, a global company that is part of the Group, develops new technologies and business solutions for Volvo companies, and it works for external clients, including Volvo Car Corporation (a separate entity since its sale to Ford in 1999), ASSA ABLOY, and the City of Stockholm. Given the diversity of its internal and external clients, Volvo IT provides solutions that manage many different types of projects. “These activities include product development projects, manufacturing, maintenance activities, training, IT projects, and an increasing number of activities that might not formerly have been thought of as ‘projects,’ but need to be managed that way,” says Stéphane Perrin, Director of Product Planning and Project Management Solutions at Volvo IT.

The Volvo Group has sophisticated, well-developed project management processes that provide control and visibility. To support those processes, Volvo IT was using Microsoft Office Project Server 2003 and Microsoft Office Project Server 2007. Although the Volvo Group was generally satisfied with the Microsoft software, Office Project Server 2007 did not have the flexibility to adapt to the Group’s time-reporting processes. For that reason, only about half of the Group’s 2,200 users had upgraded to Office Project Server 2007.

The Volvo Group was interested in improving its resource management. “We are always looking to better anticipate demand on our resources,” Stéphane Perrin says. “We seek to manage our capacity planning and our hiring of contractors in the most efficient way.” The Group tries to keep its in-house staff always working at full capacity. “We like to make sure that we are using resources at their optimum speed. Thus we try to keep everyone occupied, to never have excess capacity,” says Stéphane Perrin. This philosophy means that the Group frequently employs contractors to augment the in-house staff. Thus, to most effectively manage those internal and external resources, the Volvo Group is always seeking to improve its portfolio management and capacity planning.

Some internal software applications did not interact successfully with Project Server 2003 and Office Project Server 2007, which sometimes resulted in employees having to enter duplicate information. For example, some employees spent 25 minutes per week entering project summary or time-reporting data into SAP enterprise resource planning software. Others had to enter such data into Microsoft Visual Studio Team System 2008 Team Foundation Server, which Volvo IT uses to implement familiar methodologies for developing IT applications. “The developers who work with Visual Studio Team System 2008 Team Foundation Server tend to use it for day-to-day tasks, for which it is very precise,” says Stéphane Perrin. “But we sometimes had difficulties mapping these details to the broader summary tasks defined by project planners.”

The Volvo Group also wanted to streamline some of its project management procedures. For example, managers sometimes struggled to successfully

publish information in simple and clear reports. Some employees had problems with the speed of the Web client, Microsoft Office Project Web Access, because it depended on the ActiveX controls on their client machines. Finally, the Volvo Group was always seeking to use employees' time in meetings most effectively. "Too much time in meetings is spent with people telling their manager what they have done," says Stéphane Perrin. "Sometimes that would take so much time that the meeting would end without a decision being made."

Thus, the Volvo Group wanted project management software that could more flexibly work with its time-reporting processes and support efforts to improve resource management, portfolio management, and employee effectiveness.

Solution

The Volvo Group participated in the Technology Adoption Program for Microsoft Project 2010 so that it would be able to provide prerelease feedback on process flexibility. The Group was intrigued by Microsoft Project Server 2010 because it would offer better ways of planning resource deployment, more features in its Web client, and close interoperation with Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010.

In February 2010, the Volvo Group implemented a pilot project with 50 users. It worked with Teamsquare, a Microsoft Certified Partner based in Lyon, France, that specializes in project management. "Teamsquare worked with us from very early in the process, looking at requirements and design," says Stéphane Perrin. "Teamsquare is a small company, but with wide expertise."

Volvo IT runs Project Server 2010 on a mixture of virtual servers and quad-core physical servers featuring 4 gigabytes of

RAM. It plans to migrate all 2,200 of its users to the new software by the end of calendar year 2010. All employees will perform their work with the Web client, Microsoft Project Web App. "Even the 500 who formerly used the full client, Microsoft Office Project Professional 2007, will be able to access everything they need in Project Server 2010 using Project Web App," says Stéphane Perrin. Because users can edit project data through Project Web App, the Volvo Group is significantly reducing the number of project managers who need Microsoft Project Professional 2010. And because Project Web App does not depend on ActiveX controls, it responds more quickly to user commands.

For the project managers who are responsible for completing project plans, reporting is important. Those managers can use the new Timeline view in Project Professional 2010 to easily create a high-level view of a project plan. They can drag tasks into the timeline and paste the timeline into presentations or e-mail messages.

Project Server 2010 incorporates and improves the functions of Microsoft Office Project Portfolio Server 2007. "We will use Project Server 2010 to both manage ongoing projects and track new initiatives or new ideas," says Stéphane Perrin. "With everything in the same place, we will make sure that we take all factors into account before making a decision."

The Volvo Group has deployed Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 to manage workflows as well as documents and forms. Because Project Server 2010 is built on SharePoint Server 2010, interoperation is seamless. For example, a SharePoint Server 2010 workflow automatically routes reports to various managers who may need to view information or perform actions on it. The

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Volvo Group also uses SharePoint Server 2010 to assist in training. Users of Project Web App can directly access a SharePoint site containing slide shows, cheat sheets, and frequently asked questions about the project management software.

Furthermore, Volvo IT has made several customizations to help Project Server 2010 interact with other software packages.

“Some customizations are small, such as macros in Microsoft Office Excel 2003 spreadsheet software,” says Stéphane Perrin. “Others are more complex. But we greatly appreciate the software’s flexibility and the ability it gives us to do these customizations.”

For example, one customization provides Project Server 2010 scheduling and time-reporting information to SAP. Another develops Project Server 2010 reports by querying databases in Microsoft SQL Server 2008 R2 Enterprise data management software. A third improves the sophistication of the dashboards that Project Server 2010 provides to executives. A fourth takes advantage of improved interoperability, which makes it easier to integrate information entered in Visual Studio Team System 2008 Team Foundation Server into Project Server 2010. Overall, the customizations fully adapt Project Server 2010 to the Group’s time-reporting processes.

Benefits

The Volvo Group uses Microsoft Project Server 2010 to make better capacity-planning decisions. It also saves time for employees through automated processes and a simple user interface, gains more visibility into projects, and improves resource management.

Value-Based Capacity Planning

The Volvo Group uses the resource and portfolio management functions of Project Server 2010 to better manage its capacity planning. “With the tools in Project Server 2010, we can manage our portfolio of projects and our resources working on those projects to maximize our capacity,” Stéphane Perrin says.

Furthermore, the Group manages that capacity to build the organization’s long-term strengths. “We use Project Server 2010 to gain more control over which projects we are starting and stopping, and when,” Stéphane Perrin says. “This means we contract out fewer assignments based on sudden demand fluctuations. Instead we base contracting decisions on the value the activities add to the organization.” By contracting out fewer strategic activities, the Volvo Group can use less costly contractors. And by assigning more strategic activities to its own employees, the Group builds internal strengths.

Time Savings

By automating more of the collection and dissemination of project management data, Project Server 2010 is saving employees time. For example, because of the integration with Visual Studio Team System 2008 Team Foundation Server, employees no longer have to enter information in multiple software applications. “The flexibility of Project Server 2010 has led to a great productivity enhancement for the employees who use Visual Studio Team System 2008 Team Foundation Server,” says Florent Gayet, Senior Consultant at Teamsquare. Likewise, because of the integration between Project Server 2010 and SAP, time entered by Volvo Group personnel in Project Web App is automatically routed to the proper SAP module. Such customized links have reduced the time spent on these tasks from

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an average of 25 minutes per employee per week to 15 minutes (a savings of 40 percent). At the same time, the reduced risk of mistakes has improved quality. Most important, Project Server 2010 performs the data collection function that too often takes place in meetings. “Our employees can use Project Server 2010 to assign resources and activities, estimate completion dates, and report on progress. This means that none of these activities have to be done in meetings,” Stéphane Perrin says. “The data already exists, providing a base as the meeting starts. So now people can spend their time in meetings analyzing data, rather than collecting it, and making good decisions based on that analysis.”

Simple User Interface

Volvo Group employees appreciate the simple user interface of Project Server 2010. The rich feature set in Project Web App makes it easier for managers to perform their work. “In Project Web App it’s very easy to find the action you want to perform,” says Gayet. “For example, the Timeline view makes it easy to report project status information.” Also, Project Web App is more responsive and more stable than previous Web clients, because it does not depend on ActiveX controls.

Quicker Routes to Visibility and Control

The Volvo Group uses Project Server 2010 to gain better visibility into projects. For example, Gayet says, “With the Timeline view in Project Server 2010, managers can easily display project status, even pasting the timeline into a spreadsheet or an e-mail message, which results in much better transfer of information.” And with SharePoint workflows, they can publish reports and link to data throughout the system.

The result of these improvements in information and communication is a better understanding of projects, and thus more control over them. For example, Stéphane Perrin says, “With Project Server 2010, we are better able to anticipate whether a project will be delayed. This gives us the opportunity to shape future contracting and distribution strategies.”

Clarified, Transparent Resource Management

With Project Server 2010, the Volvo Group gains a better view of its resourcing needs. “We can use Project Server 2010 to better anticipate whether we need more resources,” says Stéphane Perrin. With that anticipation, the Group can better manage staff and contractors. “For example, if you have to stop a project, Project Server 2010 makes it much easier to reassign people, because you know where they are and what they’re doing. With better visibility into our resource assignments, we are able to reassign our engineers and contractors in only a few weeks compared to a few months in the past.”

Furthermore, the Volvo Group can more effectively communicate with members of the team. “It’s important that resources see how their activities relate to a project as a whole,” says Stéphane Perrin. “Too often you are asked to do something, and you do it, but you don’t have the awareness of why you are doing it or where it fits in the overall project. Now, with Project Server 2010, our resources can see that information for themselves.”

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers in the United States and Canada who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to:

www.microsoft.com

For more information about the Volvo Group, call (46) 31 322 38 79 or visit the Web site at:

www.volvogroup.com

Microsoft Project Server 2010

Microsoft Project Server 2010 brings together the business collaboration platform services of Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 with structured execution capabilities to provide flexible work management solutions. Project Server 2010 unifies project and portfolio management to help organizations align resources and investments with business priorities, gain control across all types of work, and visualize performance through powerful dashboards.

For more information about Microsoft Project Server 2010, go to:

www.microsoft.com/project/2010

Software and Services

- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft Project Server 2010
 - Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010
 - Microsoft SQL Server 2008 R2 Enterprise
- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Office Excel 2003
- Microsoft Project Professional 2010
- Microsoft Visual Studio
 - Microsoft Visual Studio Team System 2008 Team Foundation Server
- Technologies
 - Microsoft Project Web App