



ABYSSINIAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Microsoft Project Server Implementation & Custom Training

“As demonstrated during the course of this engagement, sometimes a client needs to be shown the actual capabilities of a product first-hand, by an expert fluent in the technology, before they can envision just what that product can do for their operation.”

Christi Shingara, Principal Consultant – Project Lead, The Henson Group, Inc.

Overview

COUNTRY/REGION

United States

INDUSTRY Non-Profit

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC) is a not-for-profit comprehensive community development corporation dedicated to improving the quality of life in Harlem.

BUSINESS SITUATION

Considering the depth of services ADC offers its community, coordinating the complex network of activities, projects, and events is always a formidable undertaking.

SOLUTION

The Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management (EPM) Solution represented an ideal solution for ADC to achieve the strong coordination and standardization between projects and project managers, centralized resource management, and develop higher-level reporting about projects and resources.

Microsoft Gold Certified Partner The Henson Group , Inc. (THG) provided training and consultation regarding Project Professional for Harlem-based not-for-profit Abyssinian Development Corp. Subsequently, when ADC sought the more robust functionality offered by Microsoft Project Server 2003, THG stepped in to provide expert implementation assistance, including a custom training component.

BUSINESS SITUATION

Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC) is a not-for-profit comprehensive community development corporation dedicated to improving the quality of life in Harlem. ADC's mission is to increase the availability of quality housing for people of diverse incomes; enhance the delivery of family and social services, particularly to the homeless, elderly, families and children; foster economic revitalization; enhance educational and developmental opportunities for youth; and build community capacity through civic engagement.

Considering the depth of services ADC offers its community, coordinating the complex network of activities, projects, and events is always a formidable undertaking. Furthermore, as a not-for-profit with relatively limited funds for administrative management and technology tools, ADC is fiscally conservative and must make the most of every investment it makes.

To grasp the challenges ADC faces in managing activities, it is important to understand the scope of its programs. These worthwhile endeavors that make a profound impact on the lives of residents in Harlem in New York City include:

Affordable Housing Development

ADC's initial theory of change was that rebuilding the physical infrastructure of the Harlem community was a necessary first step toward its revitalization. During ADC's first full year of operation, 65% of the housing in Central Harlem was city-owned, mostly due to abandonment. Today, less than 30% of the housing stock is owned by the City of New York. ADC develops rental housing and homeownership opportunities for the residents of Central Harlem. Over the past 15 years, ADC has created over 1,000 units of affordable housing in 82 buildings. A bulk of the stock developed has been targeted for very-low

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and low-income families as well as housing for the homeless and senior citizens. Currently, there are over 300 units in the pipeline for development.

ADC has also created over 100 homeownership opportunities for moderate-income families. Homeownership is one of the keys to a neighborhood's success and growth. In New York City, more than 30% - one out of every three people - own their home. In Central Harlem, the homeownership rate is a dismal 10.7%.

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ADC recently announced that over the next three years it will strategically focus on completing major preservation, rehabilitation and revitalization efforts targeted in its immediate neighborhood - "The Abyssinian Neighborhood." ADC plans to develop over 300 units of affordable housing that will be available to a diverse range of incomes for individuals and families.

Family Services

ADC provides comprehensive services to the families of the Central Harlem community. ADC's Community Service Coordinators facilitate a broad range of family strengthening activities including crisis intervention, case management and housing assistance to approximately 600 Central Harlem families.

For over 12 years, ADC has operated Abyssinian House, a transitional Tier II Homeless Shelter for 25 families. Families receive counseling, intensive case management, and referrals to other social service agencies. Also, child care and recreational activities are available for the children. ADC works with families to provide support and resources in order to successfully transition them into permanent housing.

This year, the department is embarking on an initiative to improve and enhance its service delivery to senior citizens at Abyssinian Towers and the greater Central Harlem community through expanded case management and social services.

Economic Revitalization

ADC recognizes that in order to promote a healthy and balanced community there must be a strong infrastructure including quality services to sustain the area. ADC has worked to strengthen and rebuild the fabric of the community through economic development initiatives that support entrepreneurial activity, develop and promote local businesses, and create jobs for residents.

ADC is the proud developer of projects such as Pathmark, which employs over 200 local residents and Harlem Center, a mixed-use development with retail commercial space and an office tower, that has resulted in over 500 jobs for local residents. The International House of Pancakes that will occupy space on the ground floor of the Thurgood Marshall Academy building is a franchise owned by a group of local entrepreneurs who worked with ADC through its Neighborhood Franchise Project.

ADC also administers the Harlem Economic Literacy Program (H.E.L.P.) which provides Harlem residents with the financial tools and resources they need to participate in Harlem's flourishing economic system. H.E.L.P. is

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composed of four distinct components designed to meet the needs of our constituents: Money Matters, Homeownership, Entrepreneurship and "Youthonomics."

Education and Youth

ADC provides educational opportunities by developing programs and creating institutions that serve the children and youth of Central Harlem. ADC sponsors the award-winning Annie G. Newsome Head Start Program, which provides pre-school age children with early childhood education, socialization skills, nutrition, medical, dental and developmental screenings and a full range of early intervention services. The program works from a holistic approach, focusing on the needs of 80 children and their families, and engaging the family and community as partners.

ADC is also the sponsor and developer of the Thurgood Marshall Academy (TMA) for Learning and Social Change, a public middle and high school for grades 7-12, sponsored in partnership with New Visions for Public Schools and the Department of Education. When TMA opened the doors to its new school building in February 2004, the Academy had nearly 400 students enrolled.

ADC's Gateway Builders Leadership Program serves teens ages 13-18 in afterschool and summer programs by focusing on and creating age-appropriate activities in environments that develop and foster academic enhancement, cultural discovery, recreational engagement, and leadership for transitions to college, work, and civic involvement.

New York Jeter's Leaders Program: ADC is administering this city-wide program in partnership with the Turn 2 Foundation. Jeter's Leaders' mission is to support and create programs that empower youth who live and promote healthy lifestyles free of alcohol and substance abuse; are striving toward academic excellence and engage themselves in positive social change activity, while demonstrating leadership qualities through service within their communities. The program is designed to offer 35 student leaders from the 5 boroughs opportunities to learn more about themselves and to enhance their ability to deliver a positive message to their peers.

Civic Engagement

As a longstanding institutional member of Central Harlem, ADC recognizes the importance of community involvement and actively works with residents to participate in the area in which it serves. Through its Civic Engagement unit, ADC works with residents to enhance and improve the quality of life and increase resident participation in community life. To date, the Civic Engagement unit has helped to organize and/or provide technical support to a total of 22 tenant associations and 13 block associations. As a result, hundreds of community residents are actively grappling with quality of life issues and effectively communicating with civic leaders, police precincts, and legislators to solve problems.

Through a grant from the Neighborhood Opportunities Fund, ADC's Civic Engagement unit is working with residents over the next four years to develop a Community Organizing strategy that includes an affordable housing campaign for Harlem and greater New York City and plans to take action on salient public policy issues.

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ADC Purchases Microsoft Project

To more effectively manage its diverse slate of ongoing and planned initiatives, ADC initiated a search for a technology solution for automating Project Management. Inevitably, this search led ADC to purchase Project Professional 2003.

Microsoft Project (or MSP) is a project management software program developed and sold by Microsoft which is designed to assist project managers in developing plans, assigning resources to tasks, tracking progress, managing budgets and analyzing workloads. (The first version, Microsoft Project for Windows 95, was released in 1995. Further editions were released in 1998, 2000, and 2003.)

The application creates critical path schedules, although critical chain third-party add-ons are available from Advanced-Projects, ProChain and Spherical Angle. Schedules can be resource leveled, and chains are visualized in a gantt chart.

Additionally, Project can recognize different classes of users. These different classes of users can have differing access levels to projects, views, and other data. Custom objects such as calendars, views, tables, filters and fields are stored in an enterprise global which is shared by all users.

Through a third-party intermediary that recommended The Henson Group, the Microsoft Gold Certified Partner was engaged by ADC to provide training to the not-for-profit's department directors, IT professionals, and administrators. This engagement had to dual objectives of providing an overview of Project, as well as customized instruction as to how the technology could be applied to improve ADC's coordination of its multitude of activities.

Within months of that initial engagement, ADC internally made a decision to implement Project Server to complement and expand the functionality offered by Project Professional. Microsoft extends the capabilities of Microsoft Project with Project Server and Web Access. Microsoft Project Server stores project information in a central database, protected from unauthorized access and corruption. A Project Administrator can control security defining users and access rights.

With the most current release, Microsoft Office Project 2003, Microsoft sells a package called the Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management (EMP) Solution, which combines Microsoft Office Project Professional 2003, Microsoft Office Project Web Access 2003, and Microsoft Office Project Server 2003 together as a cohesive solution.

On the server side, ADC was interested in leveraging the Project Center tool lets executives and project managers track the status of their projects and the resources required at each step. Project also offered the capability of a Web-based front end so that users can use a Web browser to add project resources. Dubbed Project Web Access, this interface lets managers check on projects quickly, even while traveling.

Based on the initial training engagement and The Henson Group's strong Microsoft Project credentials and field experience, ADC approached the Gold Certified Partner to propose and eventually execute an optimal EPM solution.

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The Henson Group is also and is recognized among the top US consultancies in Microsoft's partner community (Microsoft's "Solution Finder") for Project engagements and achieved Microsoft's official Information Worker Solutions Competency by demonstrating our expert-level Microsoft Project-related abilities, maintaining a roster of Microsoft Certified Consultants with applicable experience, and producing numerous client references to objectively testify to our abilities.

What this meant for the ADC was that The Henson Group had the resources, project experience, and proven technical ability to achieve its objectives.

SOLUTION

The Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management (EPM) Solution represented an ideal solution for ADC to achieve the strong coordination and standardization between projects and project managers, centralized resource management, and develop higher-level reporting about projects and resources.

Microsoft Project Server 2003 is built on a flexible platform that The Henson Group customized to support ADC's existing processes and integrated the solution with the client's line-of-business systems, enabling it to derive the most out of its current technology investments. With this technology, there existed for ADC the potential to enable its entire organization to work together more effectively to continually improve processes, increase efficiency, and facilitate knowledge sharing.

At the outset of the engagement, The Henson Group met with Abyssinian IT staff to gather specific operational and functional requirements that would impact the implementation. This included an "Executive Overview Preparation," where The Henson Group worked with the Abyssinian team in preparing a PowerPoint for their executive team to provide them a better understanding of EPM and its benefits.

As part of this discovery process, The Henson Group needed to ensure ADC had the technology in place to meet the requirements for deployment. (Project Server 2003 needs to be hosted on either a Windows 2000 Server or Windows Server 2003. SQL server provides data storage for all project information created in Microsoft Project Professional, and is displayed through Internet Explorer 5.5 or higher through Project Web Access, making project information accessible to all members surrounding a project.)

Based on the information gathered during the discovery phase, The Henson Group subsequently developed a document outlining the agreed upon design, including the placement and configuration of the Project Server infrastructure.

Due to the nature of ADC's diverse needs, consulting services related to configuring Project Web Access was a critical component.

Working with Abyssinian's IT staff, The Henson Group then installed and configured Project Server and Windows SharePoint Services, followed by a round of custom configuration that included:

- Creating custom reports
- Configuring Active Directory synchronization
- Configuring Project Web Access

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As part of the project scope, the client also requested The Henson Group develop and deliver customized training for users.

BENEFITS & RESULTS

"This was a great experience for us," says Victor Millsap, Vice President, Technology, at ADC. "Greg [Henson] was also very understanding when it came to areas that were outside the scope," We are looking to work with THG on a number of future efforts and would recommend them highly."

In the competitive, challenging climate for operating a not-for-profit organization — especially one such as the ADC with its diverse scope of activities — the ability to efficiently align resources and business activities with strategic objectives can mean the difference between succeeding and just surviving.

The Henson Group provided ADC with the expert assistance it needed to achieve more effective strategic alignment and increasingly manage its activities and processes as projects — in essence, projectizing its business— to monitor performance more closely and make better business decisions about its overall work portfolio.

By planning and tracking projects with clarity and precision, ADC can now respond with greater agility to the demands of a fast-changing environment.

At the ADC, Project Server 2003 is hosted on Windows Server 2003. SQL server provides data storage for all project information created in Microsoft Project Professional, and is displayed through Internet Explorer 5.5 through Project Web Access, making project information accessible to all members surrounding a project.

Through the integration of Microsoft Outlook, team members can report task progress directly through their calendars and notify their Project Managers of their progress. Project schedules are updated automatically by Project

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Managers and can be view by project stakeholders without the need for face to face meetings.

Administrators and executives can more effectively manage the project portfolio by continually identifying, prioritizing, and investing in projects that align with overall operational strategy. (This is made easier through the Portfolio Analyzer features in Project Server.)

As anticipated, EPM extends the features of Project Professional by creating an integrated and collaborative environment. While Project Professional provides excellent tools for managing a single project, enterprise provides the ability to manage many projects using the same resources.

Specifically, benefits achieved by ADC with this solution include:

- Project Web Access allows anyone with a web browser and the proper security to access information in Microsoft Enterprise Project. The Project Center lets a user quickly access and view the current status of a project or project(s) using their web browser.
- Security based on roles enables the EPM to present the information that is of most interest to the viewer. Project and portfolio views present the information in the format that is appropriate for your level of interest. Executive and management may want to see project status and financials of all projects in a portfolio, while project managers and team members want to see individual tasks in their own projects.
- Executive dashboards provide up to the minute information on projects in the portfolio such as: status, budget, and to-date financial progress.
- The web based Portfolio Modeler allows project managers to model “what if” scenarios and to determine what the effect of changing one project will have on the other projects and resources.
- The Portfolio Analyzer provides information on projects in a portfolio. This web based tool presents status, resource, and/or financial information in graphical views to help identify trends and problem areas across projects.
- Microsoft EPM stores all documents in a central repository and can even allow users to tie risks, issues, and/or documents to specific tasks within a project plan. EPM comes with specific forms for risks, issues, and documents that can be configured for your organization’s specific needs.
- Risk management forms include mitigation and contingency planning, as well as conditions that trigger a contingency plan. Risk tracking enables project managers to record, share, update, and analyze project risks.
- Issue tracking improves the efficiency and effectiveness of project management because it allows the project manager to communicate about problems and related action items with team members and stakeholders. Realize greater accountability through a central tracking system that enables project teams to record, assign, and resolve issues.
- Issue tracking provides rich reporting, status indications, e-mail notifications, and alerts to help ensure that issues that come up during the completion of a project get attention and are resolved.



About The Henson Group

A Microsoft 2007 Partner of the Year, The Henson Group is a "Gold Certified Partner" founded by former Microsoft engineers in 2002, specializing in enterprise deployments and .NET development of Microsoft products that overcome today's business challenges.

The preferred solution provider for many US and international corporations, The Henson Group leverages direct ties to the Microsoft product groups, is a preferred sub-contractor of Microsoft Consulting Services, holds a seat on the national Microsoft Partner Advisory Council, and is recognized among the top US consultancies in Microsoft's partner community (Microsoft's "Solution Finder").

- Link documents to tasks, enhancing collaboration and knowledge sharing. Manage team documents centrally in a document repository with check-in/check-out and versioning capabilities.
- Increase participation in the project management process by enabling team members to manage, track, and report their project activities.
- Project team members can use Microsoft Project Web Access to record task progress in time sheets and send updates to the project manager for prompt feedback. Moving the data entry out to the task owner reduces the burden on the Project Manager.
- Automated e-mail messages conveniently inform your entire team about project updates, upcoming deadlines, and more. Set the type and frequency of automated e-mail notifications users receive so they are alerted appropriately when they need to take action.

Customized Training Program

Based on the client's needs, The Henson Group developed and delivered a customize course for ADC users leveraging the Project solution implemented by THG, which included custom training materials.

Subsequent to delivery of this training, a Microsoft Certified consultant specializing in Microsoft Project was deployed by The Henson Group on several occasions to provide individual instruction.

"This combination of formal training and individual instruction provided ADC with the right blend of training to ensure that the client took optimum advantage of its investment in Microsoft Project," Christi Shingara, Project Lead and Trainer, says.

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Document published December 2007.