



Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution Customer Solution Case Study



Amersham Biosciences Uses Enterprise Project Management to Improve Resource Tracking

Overview

Country: Sweden

Industry: Biotechnology

Customer Profile

Amersham Biosciences provides biotechnology and drug development equipment and services for 50,000 customers in life science, pharmaceuticals, universities, and research centers globally.

Business Situation

To better understand its efficiency and effectiveness, the Amersham Biosciences Information Management (IM) group wanted one solution for resource management, time reporting, and portfolio views.

Solution

Using the Microsoft® Office Enterprise Project Management Solution to improve resource management and time reporting, the IM group also set the stage for using the solution in other departments.

Benefits

- Standardizes timesheet tracking for projects, operations and maintenance
- Centralizes project information
- Demonstrates IM group's value
- Improves resource management
- Increases project visibility

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Malcolm Downes, Senior Project Manager, Amersham Biosciences, Information Management

The discovery of the double-helix structure of DNA fifty years ago promised a new era of DNA-based medicine and led to the decoding of the human genome. Among other endeavors, Amersham Biosciences is assisting researchers in the area of genomics, the emerging study of gene function and its role in the development of disease. Amersham Biosciences, the life sciences business of Amersham, employs 4,650 people worldwide who enable molecular medicine by creating solutions scientists can use to bridge the gap between life science research and healthcare in two main business areas: discovery systems and protein separations. The Information Management (IM) group piloted the Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management (EPM) Solution to consolidate information, to improve resource management, and to log employee time to demonstrate its value to the company.



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Amersham Biosciences, Information
Management

Situation

Products and services from Amersham Biosciences facilitate scientists' study and understanding of the implications of genetic variation that will allow future physicians to customize medications for every individual. Based upon an individual's genetic makeup, the physician will choose the most effective treatment with the fewest side effects. This personalized approach to medicine requires increased understanding of the role that genes, proteins, and cellular processes play in disease and how they affect an individual's response to treatment.

The Information Management (IM) group, based in Sweden, services global information technology systems for Amersham Biosciences. Key issues for providing worldwide assistance include ensuring that common systems for support and maintenance are in place, assigning the appropriate level of expertise to each global site, and striking a balance between strategic and maintenance projects.

“The IM group provides technical support to the functions within the Amersham Biosciences business units,” says Malcolm Downes, Senior Project Manager, Amersham Biosciences. “These groups want to know how effectively and efficiently we use their money for projects and support. With resource and time tracking, we can show them whether we are under-serving or over-serving their needs.”

Like the rest of Amersham Biosciences, the IM group has exacting and proven methodologies for running its highly complex projects. Third-party benchmarks of company processes contrasted to industry standards show that good project processes are in place. But the company's challenge is to find a way to view projects in progress more broadly so that it can manage them more effectively and make better strategic

decisions. “Today we are planning projects in too much detail,” says Downes. “We need to strike a balance between details and what senior managers want to see reported, and let that drive our level of detail.”

As many information technology (IT) departments are today, the IM group at Amersham Biosciences is looking to demonstrate its value to the business units it supports. This includes showing that the company's business unit budgets get a good return from the IM group and that both human and capital resources are used economically and successfully. Tracking strategic project time and time spent on ongoing operations and maintenance is another important dimension of determining the department's role and value. For resource management, the company simply wants the right skills on the right projects.

Solution

To implement the IM department's Microsoft® Office Enterprise Project Management (EPM) Solution, Amersham Biosciences engaged Camako Data AB (Stockholm), a Microsoft Project Premier Solution Provider and expert consultant in EPM. Conducting most of the technical and functional implementation, Camako customized the EPM Solution to meet the business needs and processes of Amersham Biosciences. Previously, the IM project managers had used various versions of Microsoft Project on the desktop, but not at the enterprise level. Downes reports that Camako's support of the company's project managers was decisive for the implementation during the pilot phase.

The EPM Solution currently runs as a prototype installation for the IM group within Amersham Biosciences. Because many of the staff and consultants work from different geographies, a wide area network (WAN) connection is an important part of the solution. The EPM Solution performs well

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using Terminal Services, according to Downes, who frequently logs on from Wales, U.K.

IM project and resource managers had used a combination of tools for project management and tracking, including multiple Lotus Notes databases, versions of Microsoft Project, Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, and paper files. This combination of tools made consolidating project information problematic. The same information had to be entered and updated in multiple systems—sometimes in multiple locations—creating inefficiencies and introducing human error into the process.

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Project managers and resource managers at Amersham Biosciences are interested in time tracking with the EPM Solution. To bring in projects on time and on budget, project managers want employees to log both their project and their non-project time. To disperse the same resources appropriately across both projects and support tasks, the resource managers want to assign the right skill sets to a project, track the progress of team members' efforts, and identify when individuals will be available for other projects.

To avoid being caught between maintenance and strategic work, the classic conundrum of IT departments, the IM group resource managers need to clearly identify the proper balance between routine maintenance and support and project work. The EPM Solution is expected to help IM managers gain a better understanding of the group's dual role helping the group allocate resources appropriately and improve cost efficiency.

Better time tracking also will illustrate how IM is performing in both areas against its internal customers' budgets and show whether they are over-served or under-served.

During the pilot program, the IM group consisted of five project managers, two executives, two members of the IM project office (IMPO), and 20 team members, including some external consultants. The group tracked 20 of its short-term projects and kept a history of projects in the project database. Soon the user base is expected to expand to 35 or more project managers, 10 executives, and 300 team members.

The IM group has been wrestling with how to align its current individual project work with the company's five-year strategy. “The portfolio overview of projects using the Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution will enable us to see how well we have prioritized to meet these long-term goals,” Downes says.

Benefits

The IM group sees the EPM Solution providing better resource planning, supporting a portfolio planning process, and improving resource usage. “Consolidating department project data so that portfolio views are available will aid management decision making and cost analysis,” says Downes.

Downes expects the EPM Solution to help project managers comply more closely with the project methodology at Amersham Biosciences, to increase the visibility of projects so that decisions regarding schedule and resource deviations can be made quicker, and to provide a comprehensive view across the company's project portfolio.

“We expect an improved view about the resource balance between operations,

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maintenance, and support on one hand and project activities on the other," says Downes. "The Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution will support portfolio-based decisions, and we'll be able to show how the IM budget is spent and what value is delivered to our businesses."

Improving customized resource planning and time reporting are currently higher priorities, but the IM group is considering using the EPM Solution for management scorecard reporting. Potentially, the EPM Solution even may reduce the number of site licenses needed compared to stand-alone product licensing because web access licenses obviate the need for the full Microsoft Project Professional client licenses that are presently used by some project team members, Downes notes.

Working with the EPM Solution pilot with an eye on future benefits to Amersham Biosciences, the IM group has been keeping the R&D and Operations departments informed along the way. Both have shown an interest in what IM is doing regarding project management.

Downes says that IM and the other groups see the integration of project planning, time reporting, and resource management with non-project activities as the primary benefit of

the solution. A second benefit is having an industry standard tool as an EPM solution and being able to leverage knowledge and customizations from group to group. Downes acknowledges that future integration of the EPM Solution with Lotus Notes would be an important step toward reducing the amount of redundant data entry.

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- Microsoft SQL Server 2000
- Microsoft Windows 2000 Professional

- Microsoft Windows 2000 Server
- Microsoft Office 97

■ Technologies

- Microsoft Internet Information Services

Hardware

- Compaq EVO 510 D

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