



Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution Customer Solution Case Study

Volvo Car Corporation Is Identifying Ways to Improve Project Management

Overview

Country: Sweden

Industry: Automotive/manufacturing

Customer Profile

Gothenburg, Sweden-based Volvo Car Corporation has prided itself on excellence for over 75 years. Its more than 25,000 employees build approximately 400,000 cars each year for sale in more than 100 countries.

Business Situation

Volvo Car Corporation wants a more effective way to plan projects. The company's combination of tools did not give it the level of integration needed for cross-company communication.

Solution

Volvo conducted a concept study to define improvements to its project-planning procedures, including an investigation of the Microsoft® Office Enterprise Project Management Solution as a system support.

Benefits

- Positive user response
- Visibility into current project processes
- Visibility into improvement opportunities
- Solid partner support

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Bertil Berntsson, Project Planning Manager, Research & Development at Volvo Car Corporation

As a project-centric organization, Volvo Car Corporation always strives to improve its project management processes and find tools to support them. The company initiated a concept study to define how it could improve the use of project time plans, reports, and scorecards. A significant piece of the study involved evaluating how the Microsoft® Office Enterprise Project Management (EPM) Solution could support Volvo's use of plans, reports, and scorecards to manage projects across the organization. Working with partner Camako, Volvo held a series of workshops with employees from around the organization and ran the EPM Solution through a variety of realistic scenarios, measuring its strengths. User response was positive, and Volvo decision makers are currently evaluating the approval of a prestudy for a more detailed examination of the solution.

“It was essential to have Camako as our system experts in the workshops to show us how the Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution could best be used.”

Jenny Tønning, Business Process Analyst,
Volvo Car Corporation

Situation

Volvo Car Corporation designs and builds a variety of sedans, wagons, and other vehicles for consumers around the globe. The company is always evaluating the effectiveness of its processes and whether there are better ways of conducting business.

Because its work is largely project based, the company considers the efficient management of each car-building project to be of the highest importance. Volvo is determined to review and improve its project-planning processes.

Camako, a Microsoft® Office Project Premier Partner, demonstrated Microsoft Office Project 2002 Professional for Volvo. This generated the company's interest in investigating the Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management (EPM) Solution and its integrated planning features. “What we saw in the demonstration spurred us to look much more deeply into the Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution,” says Alf Carlson, Volvo Car Corporation Process Manager, Time and Resource Planning. The company hoped that those planning features would give it the ability to plan from the high-end portfolio level all the way down to detailed team member planning. The overall goal was to set up a structure that would make the company more coherent in its overall planning methodologies.

Solution

Because Microsoft Project 98 was already in use at Volvo, it was natural for the company to investigate the EPM Solution that Microsoft offers. Volvo decided to embark on a concept study to determine whether the EPM Solution would be able to support its workflow and processes within project management. Positive findings from the concept study could prompt Volvo to initiate a prestudy—an in-depth analysis of how the EPM Solution would work with the company's procedures.

This prestudy's results would then be the foundation for Volvo's eventual decision regarding the implementation of the EPM Solution.

The purpose of the initial concept study was twofold. First, the company wanted to define how it could improve the use of tools such as project time plans, reports, and scorecards when managing its car projects. Second, Volvo sought to evaluate the ability of the EPM Solution to support its existing and desired methods for working with these tools.

Gathering Information Through Workshops

For the concept study, Volvo worked with Camako, which helped perform the actual study and contributed its expertise as to how the EPM Solution could support Volvo's defined work processes. Part of Camako's involvement in the study included participating in a series of 12 interactive workshops. In total, 40 to 50 people from a variety of areas in the company took part in the concept study. The study's goal, in part, was to give Volvo the opportunity to learn more about the EPM Solution and its capabilities by applying the solution to real Volvo projects, with real data from automobile research and development projects.

Each workshop had a different theme, from planning and collaboration to risk management and reporting. The workshops were aimed at users in Volvo's business units as well as those in technical units and in the project management sector, so that Volvo received input from roles across the organization.

The first portion of each workshop involved interviewing users about their business processes and areas where they saw room for improvement. “In the morning, we listened to Volvo employees tell us how they are

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Alf Carlson, Process Manager, Time and Resource Planning, Volvo Car Corporation

working today, the project-sharing activities they currently engage in, the combination of applications they use, and whether these applications are meeting their project-planning needs,” says the project consultant from Camako. “We then showcased the ability of the Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution to meet those needs. Each afternoon was tailored to demonstrate what the system could do to address the scenarios that arose in the morning session.”

To conclude each workshop, Volvo and Camako held a discussion about the many ways to customize the EPM Solution to optimally match Volvo’s business practices. At this point, they also walked users through a sample project plan that showed how to classify and visually manipulate project views, how to change data tables, how to run a variety of reports, and so on. “The Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution is so versatile that it’s important for users to see the options available to them,” says the Camako project consultant. For the concept study, Volvo and Camako elected to use real project data because user feedback is only accurate when the solution is being tested against realistic scenarios with data known by the users.

Depending on the audience attending each workshop, participants were encouraged to experiment with the EPM Solution and test its features and functionality in between workshops, especially when the users had prior experience with Microsoft project management tools. Because the system was set up as a separate local area network that was completely isolated from Volvo’s normal networking environment, it was safe to experiment. Some users even brought their own portable PCs, plugged them into the hub, and logged on using Microsoft® Windows® Terminal Services accounts provided by Camako.

Fine-Tuning the Solution

After every workshop, Camako met with the two internal Volvo project leads to debrief, review participant feedback, and refine the approach for the next workshop. Jenny Tønning, Business Process Analyst at Volvo Car Corporation, says “It was essential to have Camako as our system experts in the workshops to show us how the Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution could best be used.”

For the concept study, Volvo established a special room and installed a local area network that included 10 client machines and a single server. The LAN had a prototype installation of the Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution. Because Microsoft Office Excel is used by Volvo, the team also looked into Microsoft Office Professional Edition 2003 to be able to experiment with such tasks as importing and exporting data within spreadsheets. The study also made use of the Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003 operating system, Windows SharePoint™ Services, the Windows XP Professional operating system, and SQL Server™ 2000. The prototype setup made use of Terminal Services so that it would not affect the Ford Global Client, which is the network environment used by Volvo. The company dedicated two people working at least half-time on the project for six or seven weeks, along with the 40 to 50 other internal staff members who participated in different workshops.

“We investigated the Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution in terms of its possibilities and functionalities, focusing on time planning and follow-up,” says Carlson. “We wanted to use the workshops to consolidate user feedback about potential process shifts and see how their requirements compare to the features available in the solution.”

Over the course of the workshops, Volvo evaluated the functionalities in the EPM Solution with regard to time plan creation and management, as well as possible ways to track project status. Volvo also looked into the functionalities regarding scorecards pulling data from various systems within the company. Finally, the company reviewed additional functionalities such as resource planning and issue and document management.

At the end of six weeks of workshops, the company held two demonstration seminars for approximately 50 Volvo attendees. The seminars revealed the results of the concept study, using the concept data in the system and measuring its performance. "This system gives us the possibility of secure information between planning levels," says Bertil Berntsson, Project Planning Manager, Research & Development at Volvo Car Corporation. "It also gives the project reports a better balance in a more optimal way, compared with the different systems we use today."

Benefits

Volvo's concept study produced enough Volvo-specific data about the EPM Solution for a solid report to decision makers before they consider embarking on a more detailed prestudy of the system. "As a result of our concept study, we have now built a solid foundation for making sound business decisions about project management tools," says Carlson.

Over the course of the concept study, Volvo and Camako developed a positive working relationship as they evaluated multiple setups and approaches. "The Volvo team worked hard to look at all possible variables and document everything," says the Camako project consultant. "Volvo produced thorough documentation and was extremely organized

in its approach to evaluating the Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution."

For Volvo, one of the benefits of the concept study was learning how to make its planning information more available to its many users. "Project Web Access is one component of the Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution that adds a lot of value to the system," says Carlson. "It can help to share information in a more accessible and user-friendly way."

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Software and Services

- Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution:
 - Microsoft Office Professional Edition 2003
 - Microsoft Office Project Professional 2002
 - Microsoft Office Project Server 2003
 - Microsoft Office Project Web Access
- Microsoft SQL Server 2000
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003, with Windows SharePoint Services and Terminal Services

Hardware

- Compaq ProLiant 5500

Partners

- Camako

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