

MoD makes major change to information-sharing with IBM expertise

Overview

The Challenge

- To improve workplace information sharing and collaboration in a complex organisation
- To replace multiple, expensive, silo-based websites with a single, cost-effective and scalable Defence-wide intranet
- To meet the statutory requirements of the UK Freedom of Information and Disability Discrimination Acts

The Solution

- IBM Global Business Services (GBS) worked with MoD to create a strategy for, and then implement, a new Defence Intranet

The Benefits

- Fast, intuitive employee access to high-quality news and information and business applications
- Savings in software licensing, webmaster training and web-page creation costs
- Introduction of a robust, business-managed intranet platform.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) is a policy-making Department of State which sets strategy and controls Britain's military resource allocation. It also coordinates the work of specialist agencies, such as the Defence Logistics Organisation (DLO), which, in combination with the armed services, deliver Britain's defence and international peace-keeping capabilities.

By 2003, lacking a corporate intranet strategy, most military and civilian Defence organisations had built their own intranets. This proliferation of websites was fast becoming unsustainable. Users could not easily find the information they needed and website creation and maintenance efforts were consuming significant organisational resources.

A multi-faceted business case for intranet transformation

"Our intranet sites were increasing rapidly," explains the Deputy Director, Information Services at MoD. "They were not user friendly and didn't have a unified look and feel. With different navigation systems and extensive duplication of information – much of varying quality – an improvement in intranet provision was badly needed."

But these were not the only drivers for change. The MoD also needed to ensure that its intranet sites met the statutory requirements of UK legislation such as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2004. In addition, multiple intranet sites were becoming ever more expensive to create and maintain. Different departments were acquiring multiple web-site creation software tools and, in an environment where staff frequently change role, training costs were high and growing.

There was also a cultural driver for change. Whilst every part of the UK Defence establishment has its own proud heritage and identity, the MoD senior management team wanted to use a new, single intranet to help create a sense of common purpose which spanned every military and civilian department and team.

"IBM displayed excellent people skills and worked as partners throughout the project. They willingly transferred skills and knowledge."

IBM portal experts chosen to partner MoD

As part of a broader 'Information Exploitation' programme, the MoD wanted to address these challenges. Because of its expertise in complex portal programmes, IBM was chosen to help create a new vision for intranet use within Defence.

IBM Global Business Services worked closely with military and civilian staff at all levels to create a new intranet strategy, to be delivered as a phased programme. Endorsed by Information Exploitation leaders, it was agreed that the first phase should focus on the information-sharing needs of civilian users and the DLO, and deliver a single Defence Intranet which could grow in later phases to accommodate pan-Defence information requirements.

Mobilising quickly, a joint Defence and IBM team deployed the first phase in eight months. User-centred design methods were used to create and evaluate an intuitive, task-focused information architecture which was implemented using the MoD's chosen content management technology. With longer-term sustainability in mind, IBM consultants also advised on the implementation of a management framework to govern the ongoing strategic development and day-to-day operation of the new intranet.

IBM consultants proved effective agents of change

The project team worked hard to secure 'buy-in' to the programme from key stakeholders at every level. This investment was vital to the successful deployment of the new Defence Intranet.

In the words of Deputy Director, Information Services at MoD, "IBM displayed excellent people skills and worked as partners throughout the project. They willingly transferred skills

and knowledge and their coaching and mentoring were excellent. This knowledge sharing approach ensures full value. The close co-operation between IBM and the MoD helped achieve excellent results very quickly."

These results included increases in intranet use as staff quickly experienced the benefits of an intuitive information design, and consistent presentation of high quality content, enabled by the new template-based content management system.

In addition, the intranet-based News Channel won Best in Class for "online news service (internal)" at the 2006 Communicators in Business Awards.

The project is already delivering significant productivity benefits by enabling devolved content ownership and end user publishing within a business managed environment.

The Defence Intranet: An enabling platform for a C21st workplace

The first phase of the Defence Intranet Programme has established a solid foundation for the further expansion of information sharing and employee self-service. "Phase one set the scene for a better way of delivering, processing and accessing information within our organisation," says the Deputy Director, Information Services at MoD "The key stakeholders recognise the benefits of this and are right behind its continued rollout."

For more information

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