

Project 2013 Customer Solution Case Study



Nonprofit Achieves 950 Percent ROI with Project Management Solution



Overview

Company: ETS

Company Website: www.ets.org

Company Size: 2,500 employees

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Education—Testing

Company Profile

Headquartered in Princeton, New Jersey, ETS develops and administers more than 50 million assessment tests annually in 180 countries. It also conducts educational research, analysis, and policy studies.

Business Situation

ETS had been using manual processes to manage projects in all aspects of its business. These processes introduced time delays and the potential for human error.

Solution

ETS standardized on a project management solution based on Microsoft Project Server.

Benefits

- Gained end-to-end project and resource management
- Reduced employee attrition
- Achieved a 950 percent return on investment (ROI) through improved resource management
- Reduced cost overruns
- Improved performance

“For 10 years, we have worked with The Occam Group to optimize Project Server so we can deliver on our mission. We’ve benefited from four versions of the product—the business value just keeps on growing.”

Don Gravatt, Senior Director, Enterprise Project Management, ETS

Ten years ago, when ETS replaced manual processes with a Microsoft Project Server solution to manage the projects required to develop its assessment tests and educational services, one business unit achieved a 950 percent return on investment through improved resource management. Two other business units won lucrative ongoing contracts due to the flexible configuration capabilities of Project Server. Today, Project Server is used to manage the more than 100 corporate projects completed each year at ETS. And with the performance improvements built into Microsoft Project Server 2013, employees are more productive because they are saving hours in publishing wait times.



Situation

ETS is a nonprofit organization founded in 1947 with a mission to advance quality and equity in education by providing fair and valid assessments and related education and test development services. Its tests and products and services measure knowledge and skills, promote learning and educational performance, and support education and professional development.

The coordination required to develop and market a large portfolio of specialized products and services means that ETS has always been a project-focused organization. However, for much of its history, the organization did not have a project management solution. Business units ran their own projects, using manual, paper-based processes to manage resources and schedules.

Marketing and Public Affairs were overburdened, which affected marketing collateral delivery to business units. The IT department had challenges tracking program releases for the proprietary systems that it used to develop ETS tests.

Also, the Statistical Analysis and Psychometric Research unit, which conducts research into the objective measurement

of skills and knowledge, personality traits, and educational achievement, struggled

with a high attrition rate caused by inadequate resource management.

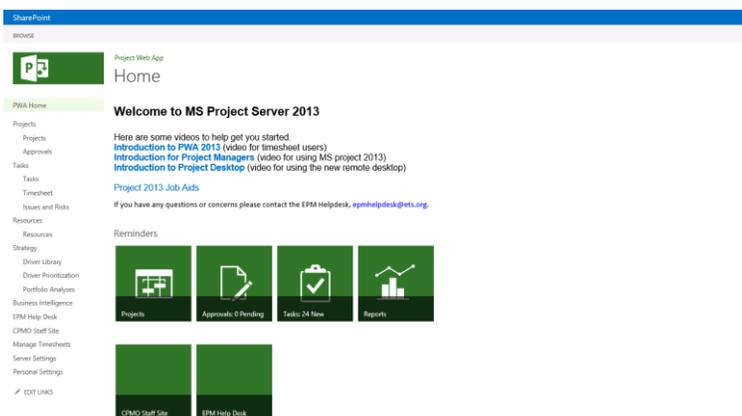
“In 2000, our new CEO mandated a change from a disconnected structure to an integrated organization with shared resources,” says Don Gravatt, Senior Director of Enterprise Project Management at ETS. “The change threw into relief the inefficiencies of manual, ad-hoc project management and the duplication of work that resulted from fragmented operations. At the same time, we began bidding for contracts in new markets for us, such as the kindergarten to grade-12 market, which demanded more operational rigor. Two things became clear: We needed a global view of our project portfolio, and we needed better resource management of projects run by the business units. We started looking for a project management solution.”

Solution

The organization found that solution when it began working with The Occam Group, a member of the Microsoft Partner Network. For more than 10 years, Occam has been instrumental in helping ETS to maximize the business value of a Microsoft project management solution. Microsoft Project Server uses Microsoft SharePoint technology as its foundation and it supports two user interfaces: the desktop client, Microsoft Project Professional, and the browser-based Project Web App (Figure 1). Project Server stores project information in a central Microsoft SQL Server database, protected from unauthorized access and corruption.

“Project Server is just as powerful as its competitors, but it has a superior user interface,” says Gravatt. “People feel comfortable going from Microsoft Office programs to Project Server. We were looking for a long-term solution to our

Figure 1 – ETS employees gain anytime, anywhere access to project data using the browser-based Project Web App, part of the company’s project management solution from Microsoft.



project management needs, and I liked the product roadmap and the longevity of a Microsoft solution.”

Since 2003, ETS has used every version of Project Server up to and including Microsoft Project Server 2013. “The history of Project Server at ETS testifies to its flexibility and extensibility as a platform. It’s also a testament to Microsoft’s commitment to robust product development,” says Randy Barnhart, Chief Operating Officer at The Occam Group. “Adoption of Project Server grew across ETS based on the value they realized with each successive deployment.”

In 2004, ETS formed the Corporate Project Management Office (CPMO). The CPMO began with four employees; today there are 70 staffers overseeing a portfolio of more than 100 projects every year. “Our use of Project Server grew to where we began experiencing long publication wait times,” says Gravatt. “Occam assured us that the architectural upgrades in Project Server 2013 Service Pack 1 would solve our

performance issues, so we upgraded to that version in April 2014. Occam’s expertise with Project Server has been an invaluable resource over the years. As usual, they were right.”

Benefits

ETS has used Project Server to support the development of an increasingly competitive and diverse line of products and services and to win contracts in new markets. “For 10 years, we have worked with The Occam Group to optimize Project Server so we can deliver on our mission,” says Gravatt. “We’ve benefited from four versions of the product—the business value just keeps on growing.”

The following illustrate some of the best use case scenarios for Project Server at ETS:

- When the Statistical Analysis and Psychometric Research unit adopted Project Server for end-to-end project and resource management, employee attrition stopped because employees were assigned to projects based on skill, not necessarily on tenure. “We generated a 950 percent return on investment in this case, through reduced rework, cancelling projects that had little value, and improved staff retention,” says Gravatt.
- ETS continues to win a lucrative contract for a major state testing program based on the capabilities of Project Server and Project Web App to filter portions of a project’s schedule for public and private access. Because ETS could guarantee compliance with a contractual requirement to publish certain project schedule details on a public web portal, the organization won the contract.
- Similarly, ETS won an ongoing contract with the National Assessment of

Figure 2 – The Marketing and Public Affairs unit improved overall management of the approximately 300 projects it completes every month using Project Server and a custom portal for work intake and resource management.



CPMO Embark Portal



Listening. Learning. Leading.®

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www.microsoft.com

For more information about The Occam Group products and services, visit the website at:

www.occamgroup.com

For more information about ETS products and services, visit the website at:

www.ets.org

Education Progress based on the ability of Project Server to export portions of a project's schedule to an external party. This was a contractual requirement for the work.

- The Marketing and Public Affairs unit improved overall management of the approximately 300 projects it completes every month, reduced cost overruns, and eliminated late delivery of collateral by using Project Server and a custom portal (branded Embark) built by The Occam Group, for work intake and resource management (Figure 2).
- Because of the architectural improvements in Project Server 2013 Service Pack 1, everyone at ETS noticed a huge improvement in performance. "Those people who weren't following best practices waited for up to three hours to publish in Project Server 2010," says Gravatt. "Making no changes, their projects were moving through Project Server 2013 in less than four minutes. We are looking forward to seeing what else this latest version has to offer!"

Microsoft Project 2013

The new Project Server 2013 and Project Online offer flexible solutions for project portfolio management (PPM) and everyday work, delivered either on-premises or as an online service. Enable your workforce to effectively execute with the intended business value to achieve strategic priorities with Project Server 2013. For more flexibility, take your PPM capabilities into the cloud with Project Online subscriptions through Office 365 as an always-up-to-date service with simplified IT management. Project Online and Project Online with Project Pro for Office 365 help your team deliver value from virtually anywhere.

For more information go to:

aka.ms/project/success

Software

- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft Project Server 2013

Hardware

- Server: Dell PowerEdge R280; R710

Partner

- The Occam Group