

International Chemical Manufacturers

Capital Budget Planning, Approval, Tracking and Reporting



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The Challenge

The company operates chemical plant all over the globe. A system to manage budgets is essential and series of spreadsheets had been developed that could be distributed for approval or used for tracking and reporting. This was proving unwieldy and did not give the ability to provide the management reports they require. The aim of this project was to provide a web based system budget management and reporting system.

The Solution

A web-based application has been developed so it can be accessed over the Internet from any part of the world. Microsoft technologies are used according to the company's standards. ASP.net VB.net and AJAX technologies provide the interface; SQL server is used for backend data storage and SQL Reporting Services are used to provide management reporting.

The system is developed as a series of individual modules dealing with separate parts of the process:

Forward Planning: Anticipated budget requirements for projects over the next 5 years can be entered into the system and management reporting tools are incorporated to allow the company to develop a 5 year plan.

Budget Approval: The anticipated annual budget for the next year is developed using this module. Each site enters the projects that they plan to carry out in the next financial year and a spend profile is entered so project that extend over more than one year can be properly managed. A hierarchical series of approvals or rejections and resubmissions is used to provide an approved site, region and corporate budget.

Appropriation Request and Sanction: Once the annual budget has been approved, sanction for individual projects must be sought. The Appropriation Request module allows the required data to be added against a project and when this has been validated a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet is generated from the data. This spreadsheet conforms to a prescribed template so it can be submitted to a separate company system where the project spend can be approved. The module allows the progress of each project to be monitored from a draft stage, through submission and sanction to closure and financial completion.

Monthly Capital Expenditure Reporting: Sites use a variety of different system to track spending. Actual spend data from these systems is extracted monthly into a standard spreadsheet format and uploaded into the system. Site managers enter estimated spend to completion for each project. This data is compared against the approved budget and monthly reports produced.

Project Documentation Library: A series of project documents has been developed to assist in managing projects from the initial concept stage through to completion. These comprise procedures and guidelines as well as forms and submissions. Depending on the complexity of the project, different documents must be read and completed. The Project Documentation Library allows site managers to determine and access the documents required for each project.

Context Sensitive Help: Help is incorporated into the system so specific details on how to use each module or each individual function can be obtained. The help also incorporates FAQs to users can do some troubleshooting before needing to contact the helpdesk support team. The help system is also used to record modifications to the system and the first time the user logs onto the system following an update, the user is informed of the changes that have been incorporated.

The Benefits

The development of the Budget and Reporting system has provided many benefits including:

- Live management reporting - multiple report formats including graphs and tables and comprehensive search criteria can be used to obtain exactly the information required.
- Live data management - Managers can get live information on the status of their projects and budgets.
- Budgets can be quickly rejected, revised and resubmitted many times until the optimal budget is achieved.
- Actual Spend can be monitored against budget to catch any overruns early.
- Built in security ensures that users can only access the data they are authorized to view and/or amend.
- Context Sensitive Help – comprehensive help pages and FAQs for troubleshooting minimize the requirement for the intervention of the helpdesk to give assistance.

The Technologies

- ASP.NET
- Visual Basic.NET
- AJAX
- ADO.NET
- C#.NET
- HTML
- Microsoft SQL Server
- XML
- Microsoft Excel
- SQL Server Reporting Services
- Forms Based Authentication

Case Study...cont

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