

Canadian Tire Rolls Out SharePoint® For Worker Collaboration

Overview

Country or Region: Canada

Industry: Retail

Customer Profile

Founded in 1922, Canadian Tire is one of Canada's largest and most-shopped retailers with 475 stores and 57,000 employees.

Business Situation

Canadian Tire wanted to streamline its communications technology platform and in doing so migrate away from its Lotus Notes environment.

Solution

With help from Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner Envision IT, Canadian Tire implemented a platform based on Office SharePoint Server 2007.

Benefits

- Faster search results
- Streamlined presentation
- Easier document management
- Future-growth platform

“Our employees require the ability to obtain information quickly and easily to make timely and well-informed decisions. Office SharePoint Server ensures we have the most up-to-date and relevant information at our fingertips.”

Laura Sousa, Vice President of Enterprise IT and Governance, Canadian Tire

With over 5,500 employees at its corporate head office and 475 retail outlets nationwide, Canadian Tire was looking to refresh its Intranet site known as inTIREnet. The pre-existing site, hosted on a Lotus platform, was visually cluttered and staff complained of poor search functions. Canadian Tire teamed up with Microsoft® technology partner Envision IT to move its entire Intranet to a SharePoint® collaboration and document-management platform. Now, employees using the SharePoint-supported Intranet can easily search documents and share information across the network and receive daily corporate news updates. The solution helps Canadian Tire extend communication between employees in the corporate office, also known as the Home Office, while offering greater security measures and access to internal documents.

Situation

Founded in 1922 when two brothers invested \$1,800 to open a tire and garage shop in Toronto, Canada. Canadian Tire Corporation has since grown into one of Canada's largest publicly traded companies and most-shopped retailers. Today the company consists of five inter-related businesses that include a range of automotive, sports and leisure and home products, apparel, petroleum outlets and financial services. With 1,200 stores and gas bars across Canada, Canadian Tire employs more than 57,000 people including 5,500 who work in the company's headquarters, known as the Home Office, in Toronto.

Collaboration is key to Canadian Tire's success. It's critical for Canadian Tire to provide its workforce with consistent, user-friendly access to a range of administrative and human resource-related documents and forms regardless of where they work.

Over the years, Canadian Tire followed a best-of-breed technology strategy for its communication platform. The company's Dealer portal, which streamlines communications across the dispersed workforce, was based on Microsoft Office SharePoint® Portal Server 2003, while its employee Intranet, known as inTIREnet, was built on a Lotus Notes Domino environment.

Usability was another factor. However, staff found the original inTIREnet increasingly difficult to navigate. Employees commented that the site was disorganized, full of redundant or outdated material and lacked effective search features. This meant people spent more time than necessary searching for material.

"Our business relies on the ability of our employees to find information quickly and make timely and well-informed decisions," says Laura Sousa, Associate Vice President of

Enterprise IT and Governance, Canadian Tire. "Our Intranet system is crucial for that."

To address these challenges and build an effective, enterprise-wide communications network, the enterprise architecture group decided to move from a point-solution model to a standardized, end-to-end technology platform. "We needed a new system that would be a like-for-like replacement of the existing inTIREnet in many ways, but that was also more intuitive and streamlined, and with greater security controls and improved search features," said Sousa.

Solution

Canadian Tire decided to decommission its Lotus software and extend SharePoint Server 2007 to support inTIREnet. Based on its existing enterprise agreement with Microsoft, the company was able to leverage existing but unused licensing capacity, which helped keep migration costs to a minimum.

"While the project was funded through IT Renewal to retire the Notes environment and was intended as a like-for-like replacement, we were able to leverage the in-the-box functionality of SharePoint to go much further beyond that," says Peter Carson, President of Envision IT, a Microsoft Gold Partner. "We gave the site a major brand refresh, made extensive use of SharePoint's great search capabilities, and generally re-organized the site to make it easier to use and to find information in it."

Together Envision IT and Canadian Tire catalogued and collected more than 30,000 documents from the old site before moving them to SharePoint Server 2007. Over the last two months of the eight month project, Envision IT worked closely with employees and managers to archive up to 50 per cent of the existing content which was outdated. This helped the company reduce its migration effort and eliminate out-of-date material.

To ensure the new platform was flexible enough to meet the work demands of one of Canada's largest retailers, Envision IT built the new inTIREnet system on top of Windows® Workflow Foundation, designed to help developers build workflow-enabled applications that sit atop the Windows operating system. This has helped provide a structured process that governs how documents are handled on inTIREnet, making it easier for the enterprise architecture group to make modifications. For example, Envision was able to build rich workflow applications for HR functions such as continuing education approvals and payroll, and course registrations.

Also, the Enterprise Search function in SharePoint Server 2007 simplifies document and WebPage search on inTIREnet, enabling staff to make better decisions based on the latest information and facts more quickly.

"Our employees expect the information on our system to be accessible and up-to-date," said Souza. "The SharePoint Server 2007 search tool allows people to find information quickly and easily. The migration also helped us remove old and irrelevant data that had been clogging the old site."

Benefits

Canadian Tire now benefits from a standardized, easy-to-use Intranet site flexible enough to meet everyone's needs. The retailer is also looking to the future, planning for additional add-ons as site development progresses.

Faster search results

Employees no longer have to browse through inTIREnet to locate a document. Instead, by taking advantage of Enterprise Search technology in SharePoint Server, information is only a few keywords away.

"Search was a major challenge. Employees were spending too much time trying to find relevant information," said Souza. "Now staff can type their query into the search box and find what they need instantly."

Streamlined presentation

With limited capability to alter format, the inTIREnet homepage along with the entire site, had become cluttered and difficult to navigate. SharePoint Server 2007 has helped the enterprise architecture group guided by Internal Communications, build a tailored look and feel for inTIREnet and ensure information on the site is accessible and logically organized. It also provides them with the option to lock-down specific content areas like HR's pages, so only staff with appropriate clearance can read or post content.

"No longer do employees have to sift through page after page to find the information they need," said Souza. "By providing us with the ability to limit who has editing access, SharePoint Server 2007 has allowed us to streamline our homepage and ensure it stays uncluttered."

Easier document management

The new platform makes it simpler for people to keep documents current. Documents are automatically updated according to who has reviewed and the last date accessed. This helps Canadian Tire manage document retention by identifying and removing outdated and time-sensitive material, further reducing the time it takes to find information.

"Trying to determine if information was the most up-to-date required a lot of time and effort under the old system," said Souza, "With SharePoint Server 2007, we quickly reaped the benefits of automated labeling capabilities, which have become an inherent part of the Intranet."

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Future-growth platform

The new Intranet opens the door to a wide range of additional benefits for Canadian Tire. The company is looking to extend the solution to the corporate website. It's also considering leveraging new features such as video streaming, wikis, blogs, personal employee websites and expanded enterprise search. Also, with SharePoint's built-in security features, Canadian Tire will be able to leverage document access restrictions, ensuring only authorized personnel can access certain documents.

"We want the entire corporation to move towards SharePoint Server 2007," said Sousa. "We look forward to leveraging a wealth of new opportunities as our vision for the Intranet evolves. SharePoint is the only all-in-one solution that will allow us to meet our vision of incorporating all our digital content, both internally and externally facing, onto one unified platform."

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