

The People-Ready Business

Case Study



Orbicon A/S

Consultancy Firm Strengthens Competitive Advantage by
Improving Communication with Clients

A whole new IT foundation is set to give the consultancy firm Orbicon and its employees the optimal tools for optimizing resources and processes and promoting knowledge sharing and collaboration, internally and externally. The solution will be based on Microsoft Dynamics™ AX and a SharePoint®-based project portal.

OVERVIEW

Country or Region

Denmark

Industry

Consultancy and advising services

Customer Profile

With 350 employees in branches across Denmark, Orbicon A/S is among the country's absolute elite when it comes to consultancy companies in the areas of environment and working environment. The company offers consultancy in areas such as nature and water environment, water supply, wastewater, contaminated soil, physical planning, offshore, IT, working environment, industrial environment, construction, as well as sport and leisure.

Business Situation

In recent years, Orbicon has acquired a number of companies. These companies used their financial systems differently, so there was a need to establish a single, shared information system for the entire company, supplying coordinated information to both the management and employees as well as optimising the utilisation of the company's many competencies and those of its clients and partners.

Solution

Orbicon is implementing a Microsoft Dynamics™ AX platform with a software-solution based on Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007 and the 2007 Microsoft Office system in order to strengthen communication both internally and externally with the company's many clients and partners.

Benefits

- Avoiding double work and saving time
- Easier access to shared information and data both internally and externally
- More flexible relations with clients and partners

Partner

WM-data

“A lot of other people use Microsoft's products, and by selecting Office SharePoint Server 2007, we get a system that many people want to develop their solutions for.”

Mogens K. Johansen
Financial Manager
Orbicon A/S

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Situation

With 350 employees in branches all over Denmark, Orbicon A/S is among the country's absolute elite when it comes to consultancy companies in the areas of environment and working environment.

Orbicon was founded in 1999, but as part of the Dalgas group, which is owned by Hedeselskabet, the company can trace its history back 140 years. The name change last year from Hedeselskabet Miljø og Energi marked that Orbicon has to a greater degree turned its sight outwards towards international markets. The purpose is to be able to provide international consultancy within the environmental area. The company's core competencies cover all imaginable consultancy areas related to the environment. At the same time, a large part of Orbicon's work is connected to the development of technical IT systems for the environmental sector.

In recent years, Orbicon has acquired a large number of environmental consultancy companies. In the same period, the market has changed directions so that consultancy firms and their clients need to work closer together, and the company's new IT project should be seen in this light. The acquisitions mean that IT systems as well as employees from many different companies need to be able to communicate to be able to collaborate seamlessly. This entails a comprehensive reform of Orbicon's entire IT apparatus and this has led the company to try to improve the communication challenges with new software.

Solution

Orbicon gave its employees Microsoft® software to easily access and bind together the many different IT systems together in one common case and document handling

solution. The idea is to allow employees and, over time, clients and partners, access to information from the system.

Orbicon will introduce Microsoft Dynamics™ AX 4.0 as a common system for the whole company for finance and production. The comprehensiveness of the adjustment of the foundation of Orbicon's operation is so great that financial manager Mogens K. Johansen does not hesitate to call it a small revolution. All the firm's solutions for company management and infrastructure will be replaced in the course of the next one and a half years:

"The management, engineers, geologists, biologists, finance – all will work from the new platform. It is our goal to save every employee five minutes a day, which corresponds to 16 hours per person per year. We expect to fulfill this goal in the course of the next one and a half to two years, which means that already within the next couple of years we will see an efficiency improvement of DKK 3.6 million [U.S.\$0.667 million] – annually, that is," the financial manager explains.

Orbicon's priorities in the IT area are to a great extent directed by the wish to provide employees with the appropriate tools and qualifications to knowledge share and to ensure high quality in their work. A large part of the expected winnings will arise as a result of the possibilities for harmonising work methods provided by the new solution:

"It is hard to imagine traffic running well without rules; in the same way, we need to learn to run on the same road network. Once we have learned this, we will save time and resources which may be freed for tasks that create more value for the customers," Mogens K. Johansen says.

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Benefits

Avoiding Double Work

“We want to avoid double work. With a common project portal with readymade templates for letters, mails, project descriptions, etc., every employee saves time by not having to key in a lot of information every time he or she writes something,” he explains.

Like so many other modern companies, Orbicon is moving towards a digital future. Work processes are being digitalised and the paper flow is limited:

“Take a meeting with five participants. Today the agenda and minutes are sent out to five different people manually; with the new system, the latest versions of agenda, presentations, etc. will be accessible to all participants. Another example is the approval process for a project or document. We manually send the project for approval in a routine flow from employee to employee, but in the future this flow will take place via the portal. The project is sent on automatically once an employee has approved it,” Mogens K. Johansen explains, adding that documentation and archiving processes also become easier and more transparent when all documents are archived in one single location in a simple way and can be easily retrieved.

“This way we avoid duplication of effort and that employees are spending wasted time looking for the right versions of documents and files. Today we often work in smaller groups but with the new setup will have the tools to collaborate better internally and create more solid-cast services and solutions,” Mogens K. Johansen says. He does not only expect to reap internal advantages from the SharePoint®-based common project platform.

“When we work according to the same concepts and use the same tools internally, we get better at collaborating across the organisation, and in this way we can create better and more seamless solutions for our clients,” he says and mentions quotations for clients as an example:

“Instead of e-mailing the documents back and forth we will in the long run be able to give clients access to a public part of the platform where we share the documents with them. It will allow us to exchange information with them in much easier, faster and more flexible ways and this will benefit Orbicon as well as our clients,” he says. Like the other players in the environmental area, Orbicon has felt the cutbacks on environment in recent years. The increasingly tight financial framework means that companies must meet increased demands for rationalisation and efficient task solving. The company also has to consider its shareholders, which means it must be ready for change. Chief executive Jesper Nybo Andersen says:

“It is absolutely essential for us to be able to tune our company to a new market with new challenges. In connection with the field of consultancy, we are seeing the re-emerging of partnerships between consultancy firms and their clients on the common development of new products. This places greater demands for openness, both on clients, on us as suppliers, and on the other partners, so that together we can optimise the various products that make up a project.”

In other words, the sharp division between client and supplier must be softened in order for both parties to reap the fruits of rationalisation. Here IT tools play a central role in the reaping process.

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“The rollout takes place at two different paces: first we make sure that our employees get access to the new software and this will take place in phases in the course of the next twelve months. When everything is up and running internally, it will be natural for us to use the platform as a hub for the exchange of knowledge and information with clients and partners. It is a great advantage that we are able to tie both clients and partners closer to us, for example, in the development process,” Mogens K. Johansen says. He mentions sports facilities as a good example of how the new systems are advantageous both internally and externally:

“Our number one expert on playing fields and sports facilities is located in Aalborg, and he will now have far better possibilities to share his knowledge with his colleagues in the rest of the country. In this way, we can provide our people working in the local branches with the appropriate knowledge and send them out to implement a project in Esbjerg or perhaps Funen. With an increase in flexibility and mobility, we reduce the barriers to collaboration,” he explains.

The constantly growing demand for knowledge also makes it necessary for clients and suppliers to be able to share their competencies, due to a general lack of competencies. In this connection, Mogens K. Johansen emphasises that Orbicon also accords great importance to the creation of a system supporting both knowledge sharing and mobility:

“The traditional workplace has changed completely. Many people work from home or from each other’s homes, and the access to data has become an essential factor, which our IT foundation will support,” he points out.

A Flexible Solution

With the new solution, the employees at Orbicon will have the software to access their many systems and applications. By doing so, they are able to communicate more effectively with clients and partners.

“A lot of other people use Microsoft’s products, and by selecting Office SharePoint Server 2007, we get a system that many people want to develop their solutions for. The system is easy to use and because it has a familiar interface, our employees are able to start using it right away,” Mogens K. Johansen explains, comparing the use of Office SharePoint Server with building with Lego bricks: “SharePoint [Server] is one big Lego plate upon which we can place various bricks (modules). The bricks are in different colours and of different types, but everything we do in the IT area at the moment is dictated by our need to fit everything onto that plate,” the finance manager says.

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The People-Ready Business.

A people-ready business is one where people can apply their unique skills, insights, and experience to create new products and services, work responsively with customers and partners, and drive operational excellence in every aspect of the business. People-ready businesses support people with knowledge, practices, and tools so that they can add the extra value that helps differentiate successful organizations in a competitive, fast-moving global economy.

www.microsoft.com/peopleready

Software & Services

Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007

2007 Microsoft Office system

Microsoft Dynamics AX 4.0

Microsoft SQL Server™ 2005