



MULTNOMAH COUNTY

SAP® PRODUCTIVITY PAK BY RWD PROVIDES KEY TO COMPLEX TRAINING PUZZLE

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Lee Dudley, Training Coordinator, Multnomah County Government

QUICK FACTS

Company

- Name: Multnomah County
- Location: Portland, Oregon
- Industry: Public sector
- Products and services: Local government services
- Employees: 5,000
- Web site: www.co.multnomah.or.us

Challenges and Opportunities

- Address training needs of 5,000 employees, including 1,000 SAP® application users, in a coordinated fashion
- Overcome a long series of previous training applications that failed to meet organizational needs
- Deal with the absence of a countywide standard, leading to pursuit of help solutions by individual county agencies

Objectives

- Provide a training application that is easy to use by authors and end users
- Establish a single application for all county agencies over the long term
- Deploy a server-based training solution that supports central administration of training content and Web access by users

SAP Solutions and Services

- SAP ERP application
- SAP Productivity Pak application by RWD (also known as RWD uPerform)

Implementation Highlights

- 1.5-week installation
- Installation of end-user software on client machines not required
- Initial training of 25 authors expanded to over 90 authors

Why SAP

- Accurate and easy-to-use simulation functionality
- Context-sensitive help functionality
- Server-based and highly scalable solution
- Integration with existing SAP solutions

Benefits

- Reduced demand on training personnel
- Increased user productivity through context-sensitive help for fast resolution of common problems
- Increased authoring productivity through quick and accurate simulation functionality
- Easier administration with server-based configuration that supports Web-enabled user access
- Reporting and statistics that identify training gaps
- Easier retention of organizational knowledge with central knowledge repository

Existing Environment

SAP software for enterprise resource planning

Third-Party Integration

Database: Microsoft

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Like any large municipality, the Multnomah County government – based in Portland, Oregon – has a lot going on. From managing libraries and administering the judiciary to collecting taxes and dispensing mental health services, the county government supports a wide range of activities across multiple agencies. From an IT perspective, the challenges are immense. Responsibility for meeting one of these challenges fell to Lee Dudley, training coordinator for Multnomah County. He was charged with finding a single application that would provide online help and training support for the applications county workers use on a day-to-day basis.

“I am one of a small number of training coordinators providing support for 5,000 employees including 1,000 SAP application users,” says Dudley. “We needed a tool that was part of a blended training approach. We could already do the stand-up classroom training using myself and a business analyst. But we also needed solid online training so that users would have 24x7 support.”

The training application also needed to meet a very tight budget and integrate seamlessly with the county’s existing SAP® solutions. “We use the SAP ERP application countywide,” says Dudley. “It’s helped us eliminate legacy systems and makes things a lot less expensive because budgets are always a concern.”

Previous Solutions Fall Short

The training applications the county had been using did not adequately address the business challenges the county was dealing with. “We had gone through five different training solutions over the years,” says Dudley. “None of them met our full expectations for usability, ease of deployment, or functionality.”

Previous applications posed difficulties for both authors and end users. “One thing we learned was that if the tool was not easy to use it would not be used,” says Dudley. “And we needed a solution that not only made authoring easy, but also made it easy for users to follow and repeat the steps in the actual screen they were working in.”

Deployment was also a problem. Many training applications required the installation of client software on end-user machines. Unfortunately, deployment and maintenance of client software also required coordination with IT departments across county agencies, creating coordination headaches and adding to the cost burden.

On top of all this, the county’s business analysts – who author the majority of training materials – were losing patience. Many expressed frustration at the need to undergo several iterations of learning different training applications, finding them ineffective, and having to move on to the next tool. “We couldn’t afford another failed solution,” Dudley recalls. “Whatever application we chose, it would have to demonstrate long-term value.”

The Best Solution Available

Multnomah County chose the SAP Productivity Pak application by RWD (also known as RWD uPerform) because it met all of the requirements the organization sought in a solution. “For us, it was the best solution available,” says Dudley. “Nothing else offered the tight integration with our SAP solutions. When you click the Help button, the application knows exactly where you are.”

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Ease of use played a key role in the decision-making process as well. “For authors,” Dudley says, “you simply click a button, conduct your transaction, and the software records all of your actions along with every associated screen. On the end-user side, you simply request help wherever you are in a transaction, and the simulation is played back so that you can repeat the exact same steps the author recorded.”



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Lee Dudley, Training Coordinator, Multnomah County Government

The county also liked the server-based installation and Web-enabled accessibility. “We can control and maintain all of our training assets in one place and publish content with a click of a button,” Dudley says. “And best of all, we don’t have to install any end-user software on client machines.”

Up and Running Quickly

The implementation of SAP Productivity Pak took just a week and a half. An internal team at Multnomah County deployed the application on a dedicated server and connected it to a database server. The team also installed the authoring component on local machines for designated authors who would be trained on how to create help content. After that, the team was ready to push help content to the user base via the Web.

One of the objectives of the implementation was to support both SAP and non-SAP training needs. “We wanted to include agencies such as our libraries that use non-SAP processes,” says Dudley. “Today, they create, publish, and deploy training content for themselves.”

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Lee Dudley, Training Coordinator, Multnomah County Government

Since the initial deployment, SAP Productivity Pak has gained wider use throughout the county. Starting with an original 25 authors, the county has now trained more than 90. Based on positive feedback and increased buy-in throughout the county system, Dudley and his team have extended the solution to additional agencies as well – including accounts payable and the library, community justice, and health departments.

A Perfect Fit for Tight Budgets

The successful implementation of SAP Productivity Pak has delivered a high return on investment for Multnomah County. “We can now do more with less,” says Dudley. “We don’t need to hire more training staff for SAP solution support because the online simulation training has greatly reduced help desk calls.” And because SAP Productivity Pak is accessible countywide, county agencies no longer need to pursue their own training solutions.

Context Sensitive Help Provides Effective Training

With context-sensitive help functionality, users never need to leave their application to request help. They simply click the Help button, and a new window appears alongside the current window with tips for the specific transaction.

In addition, the quality of the simulations has helped increase user productivity. “The online simulation is accurate and clear,” says Dudley. “It’s easy for users to follow because the training screen looks and functions exactly like the working screen.”

Ease of Use for Authors

Because SAP Productivity Pak simplifies authoring, Multnomah County has increased production of online training material. “The fact that our business analysts can create online simulations easily is a big benefit for us,” says Dudley. “We have been able to upgrade existing content and create new content as needed. And we can fill training gaps quickly because any county employee who knows how to do a particular business process can generate training content.”

Identifying Training Gaps and Preserving Institutional Knowledge

The tight integration between SAP Productivity Pak and SAP solutions has also helped the county identify those training gaps. Whenever a user clicks the Help button and no training content is returned, the application reports the specific transaction where the failed request occurred. Dudley and his team can then generate training content and publish it as quickly as the next day. The next time the Help button is clicked within the same transaction, online help is provided.

Multnomah County is also planning to use the server-based configuration of SAP Productivity Pak to support its knowledge retention objectives. "About 40% of our workforce is within five years of retirement," Dudley says. "To meet the challenges posed by this situation, we want to use SAP Productivity Pak to capture individual business knowledge through online simulations. We'll then save these simulations on the dedicated server, creating a knowledge repository that is secure and available for use long after any individual employee departs."

Building Acceptance Across the Enterprise

Dudley feels confident in the success of the implementation and sees user acceptance growing throughout the county government. "We are actively extending SAP Productivity Pak to other county agencies," he says "And the fact that we can support the training needs of all 5,000 county employees with our existing implementation only makes it easier for us to meet demand as it grows."

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The county's success with SAP Productivity Pak has also caught the attention of the City of Portland, which is currently implementing SAP software to manage and streamline critical processes. "Our experience with SAP Productivity Pak is that it's easy to use, easy to deploy, and has all the functionality you need. We trust that Portland will have similar success."

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