

MONSANTO
imagine[®]



Agricultural Innovator Empowers Employees, Cuts Costs with Integrated Enterprise Search

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Agriculture

Customer Profile

Monsanto Company, headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, is an agricultural company applying innovation and technology to help farmers around the world be successful, while also reducing agriculture's impact on our environment. It has approximately 17,000 employees around the world.

Business Situation

Monsanto's expensive search tool did not deliver good results. The company wanted to extend search to include all Web sites and corporate resources, people, and unstructured data to improve its online presence and boost productivity.

Solution

Monsanto chose Enterprise Search from Microsoft, a component of Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007.

Benefits

- Saves U.S.\$250,000 licensing fees
- Provides better search results
- Helps staffers find information, people
- Empowers IT to support business goals
- Streamlines processes, improves insight

“Monsanto's investment in Microsoft Enterprise Search helped achieve immediate business results. When we implement the full SharePoint platform, we expect to see significant new business value.”

Lou Clark, IT Strategy and Communications Lead, Monsanto

Monsanto Company, a global agricultural company, faced a license renewal deadline for its search engine used in more than 20 public Web sites and numerous intranet sites. Search results did not live up to expectations, and the tool was costly and cumbersome to manage. Monsanto evaluated Google and Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007. It chose Office SharePoint Server 2007 for its feature set, and for the value of a search solution that extended enterprise search capabilities from traditional corporate information to people and expertise. Integration between Office SharePoint Server 2007 and the familiar Microsoft Office system programs was another reason why Monsanto decided on Microsoft technologies. Monsanto saved U.S.\$250,000 in licensing fees and gained an easily deployable search solution—it took 45 minutes to migrate www.monsanto.com—that it expects to boost productivity.



"We planned for the conversion of monsanto.com to use Office SharePoint Server 2007 Search to take 1 to 2 days, but it was completed in 45 minutes. This allowed us to easily convert the rest of our sites before deadline."

Trent Overton, Information Workplace, Portals and Collaboration Technical Lead

Situation

Monsanto Company is a global agricultural business that applies biotechnology and genomics (the science that improves plant breeding by mining and mapping a plant's genetic material) to help farmers improve their operations. Monsanto's innovative agricultural products help maximize the yield potential of seeds, so farmers can produce crops more efficiently. Additionally, Monsanto is a world leader in the agricultural productivity sector, manufacturing Roundup®, brand herbicides, used by farmers and consumers alike.

Monsanto has administrative and sales offices, manufacturing plants, seed production facilities, and research centers in 47 countries. Fostering global communications—both between the company and its customers, distributors, and partners and among its employees—means that team collaboration and ubiquitous access to corporate information has long been a focus for the IT organization at Monsanto.

Information Sharing a Competitive Advantage

In his role as IT Strategy and Communications Lead at Monsanto, Lou Clark helps to develop strategic roadmaps for IT acquisitions that best support Monsanto's business goals. "The whole area of how we help people work together as teams on a global basis has been an objective of Monsanto and the IT organization for a long time," he says. "Recent accelerated growth and acquisitions within the company, and a higher level of interaction with customers and partners, drive the demand to better connect people and share information."

Internally, the IT organization heard similar demands for reliable access to information. It saw this demand as part of its rationale for developing an integrated communication and collaboration strategy that would increase

productivity and help link global teams and employees. "We consider the way in which we work together as one of our competitive advantages," says Greg Evans, Information Workplace Program Manager. "So we have developed a three-pillar initiative called the Information Workplace Program to improve access to information and global communications to help Monsanto increase our competitive advantage."

The Importance of Search

Monsanto began looking for technologies, tools, and services that would support the Information Workplace Program. A key initiative under the Information Workplace Program is improving upon the company's legacy search engine. Monsanto wanted to extend the capabilities of the company's search technology to better serve members of the public, its customers, and its employees as they look for both structured and unstructured corporate information.

Several factors contributed to the importance of search within the initial stages of the Information Workplace Program at Monsanto. The company's legacy search solution was due for an expensive license renewal and the IT organization had a strict deadline to deliver a new solution before the expiration date. The existing solution provided search capabilities on 20 public-facing Monsanto Internet sites; however, when IT staffers performed an analysis of search results they saw that in the majority of cases searches were not delivering accurate or relevant results. "We did not want members of the public, or our customers and investors, to come away with a negative experience," says Clark.

An employee survey conducted as part of the Information Workplace Program documented an equally unimpressive scenario among staffers trying to find information. "We had feedback like, 'Who decides where to hide this stuff?'" recalls Clark. "Within the

numerous intranet sites indexed by our previous search engine, people couldn't rely on search results. This wasted time as they looked for information, too many times not finding the data they needed. We knew people were working with partial or outdated information."

The solution was also a drain on IT resources. "There were technical limitations as to how we could deploy the product. It was inflexible and required a lot of custom coding for each site. Hence we didn't get very far with it," explains Vince Arter, Information Workplace, Portals and Collaboration Project Lead. "We also had security concerns with the product. It was difficult to administer, and the support just wasn't there."

Monsanto faced a decision. It could replace or upgrade its legacy search solution for now, and look for additional products and technologies later to support other Workplace Information Program goals, like building a collaborative desktop to help staff share information using everyday tools, and boosting real-time interaction. Or it could acquire search capabilities within a communications and collaboration platform that would more accurately map to Monsanto's business goals, effectively achieving two things at once.

Solution

Monsanto reevaluated its existing search solution as well as some other pure play vendors like Google and determined that the level of resources required to take advantage of these products was simply too high and the evaluated solutions were not extensible to future needs beyond Search. "We didn't want to hire people to manage our search solution," says Arter.

Choosing the Search Solution

The company narrowed its focus to Google's Search Appliance and Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007 and performed an in-depth analysis of the two products. As the IT organization's staff members learned about the Office SharePoint Server 2007 product through a series of Microsoft briefings, they became more and more interested in acquiring the much-needed search functionality as part of that product's integrated collaboration infrastructure.

Decision makers in Monsanto's IT department saw the value of the enterprise search capabilities of Office SharePoint Server 2007 deeply intertwined with its other communication and knowledge management features. This matched the company's long-term IT strategies.

"Microsoft's competitive advantage lies in the fact that its strategy with Office SharePoint Server 2007 fits our strategy for the Information Workplace Project, like our plans to deploy the 2007 Microsoft Office system as part of our collaborative desktop," says Clark. "I can't see the 2007 release of Microsoft Office in the enterprise without Office SharePoint Server 2007. It's a natural extension that delivers business value as a complete platform for information management."

Evans agrees: "The features and capabilities that Microsoft has put into Office SharePoint Server 2007 align in many cases one-for-one with Monsanto's vision of enhancing our collaborative capabilities. So we get a great search solution that feature for feature is best in its class, that requires minimal administration, that provides accurate, reliable results from a broad range of data sources, and that integrates well with Monsanto's future desktop and collaborative platforms. Choosing Office SharePoint Server 2007 was a no-brainer."

Building the Search Solution

Monsanto quickly got up to speed on the new technology. The team converted its public-facing Web site in the United Kingdom as a proof of concept project. David Brawley, Software Architect, wrote a small Web service that acts as an interface between any of Monsanto's Web sites or applications and the Office SharePoint Server 2007 search engine. "That's one of the reasons we really liked working in this development environment," he says. "We created a mechanism for any Monsanto HTML developer to deploy the SharePoint search engine anywhere to any domain that we serve, and present a seamless experience to the user. Compared to the previous inflexible tool, this makes it easy to extend the benefits of search throughout the enterprise."

"We planned for the conversion of Monsanto.com to use Office SharePoint Server 2007 Search to take 1 to 2 days, but it was completed in 45 minutes," says Trent Overton, Information Workplace, Portals and Collaboration Technical Lead. "This allowed us to easily convert the rest of our sites before deadline."

Benefits

Monsanto has already seen significant benefits from its Office SharePoint Server 2007 deployment. Avoiding the renewal deadline has saved the company approximately U.S.\$250,000 in licensing expense and eliminated the possibilities of any further expensive support costs generated by the previous solution. However, replacing an outdated and inflexible search engine with one that provides better results at lower costs are only the initial benefits, according to Clark. Monsanto acquired a superior search engine to answer its immediate needs but, more importantly, it gained an extensible information management solution for enterprise content

management that would also improve business insight, increase collaboration, and empower its IT department to make a strategic impact on corporate goals.

"Monsanto's investment in Microsoft Enterprise Search helped achieve immediate business results. We are already seeing a search engine that's returning more relevant and accurate results," says Clark. "When we implement the full SharePoint platform, we expect to see significant new business value."

Finding Resources and Sharing Knowledge

Previously, the idea of enterprise search remained unattainable at the level of IT resources Monsanto was able to provide. Because Office SharePoint Server 2007 enables access to both structured and unstructured information, it opens the way for Monsanto to provide enterprise-wide access to documents, application data, e-mail, lists, and a host of other unstructured data sources.

"We wanted to go beyond Web crawling to searching business databases," adds Arter. "Now we can unlock the information in our SAP solution and better leverage the data there to further reap the benefits from our SAP investment."

However, it's the ability to connect people with each other that has Clark the most excited about Office SharePoint Server 2007 search capabilities. "The opportunities in Office SharePoint Server 2007 to search for people and subject matter experts are huge, given our globally dispersed workforce," says Clark. "We have been getting calls from all over the world, asking when we can start."

Empowering IT to Make an Impact

Office SharePoint Server 2007 enables Monsanto IT staffers to answer the needs of

“I can’t see the 2007 release of Microsoft Office in the enterprise without Office SharePoint Server 2007. It’s a natural extension that delivers business value as a complete platform for information management.”

Lou Clark, IT Strategy and Communications Lead, Monsanto

the enterprise by providing a rich, efficient developer environment that staffers can use to deliver on the goals of the Information Workplace Program. At the same time, Office SharePoint Server 2007 requires less effort for Monsanto IT staff to manage and administer than its predecessor. Today, with improved analysis tools, it’s possible to analyze the nature and frequency of searches on different sites to fine tune indices for optimal results. IT staffers can work on requests from the field, like integrating a large seed catalogue into the search engine on one of its main Internet sites.

“For the first time, we can take real steps to connect people with each other and with the information they need to improve individual and team productivity,” says Clark. “We had deployed a lot of different technology for teams and people and it was a challenge to integrate them to provide a single gateway to corporate knowledge and resources. With Office SharePoint Server 2007, we can do it all within one, easy-to-use interface, within the framework of one complete architecture. Ultimately, that allows the IT organization to be more responsive to new business needs at less cost to the company.”

Streamlining Processes, Improving Business Insight

Monsanto IT staffers are also looking forward to fulfilling corporate goals to improve workflow applications, routing for approvals, and other paper-based business processes by taking advantage of the integration between Office SharePoint Server 2007, and the 2007 Office system core programs their workers are already familiar with.

“The bottom line is now that we have a search engine that works, we know that our employees will have better access to reliable information to improve business decisions,” concludes Clark. “A year ago, we did some initial brainstorming around bringing the

Information Workplace Project to life. We never thought we’d find the tools we picked from that session in one integrated solution, but Office SharePoint Server 2007 delivers them all. It seems like Microsoft’s vision for information management and collaboration matches ours. We’re looking forward to a great partnership!”

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: www.microsoft.com

For more information about Monsanto Company products and services, call (314) 694-1000 or visit the Web site at: www.monsanto.com

Microsoft Office System

The Microsoft Office system is the business world's chosen environment for information work, providing the programs, servers, and services that help you succeed by transforming information into impact.

For more information about the Microsoft Office system, go to: www.microsoft.com/office

Software and Services

- Microsoft Office System
 - Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007

This case study is for informational purposes only. MICROSOFT MAKES NO WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, IN THIS SUMMARY. Roundup® is a registered trademark of Monsanto Technology LLC. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.

Document published February 2007

Microsoft®