Catapult Systems

ACC Improves Productivity and Data Sharing Throughout Organization

New SharePoint intranet site improves productivity throughout organization

American Campus Communities (ACC) is the nation's premier developer, owner and manager of high-quality student housing communities. Since 1993, ACC has developed more than $2.3 billion in properties and acquired in excess of $2 billion in student housing assets. They are also a leader in third-party development and management of on-campus student housing.

During the last few years ACC has experienced significant growth, creating the need for effective collaboration and sharing of documentation throughout their corporate office as well as their property staff. An existing SharePoint 2003 intranet site provided the ability for the sharing of information at the corporate level, but it had not been adopted at property sites. A large merger brought ACC's total employee count to over 2,000 people and the situation to a head. Effectively leveraging their SharePoint platform for collaboration and documentation became a priority.

With the introduction of MOSS 2007 and enhanced features like key performance indicators (KPIs), better search and integration with Office 2007, ACC saw a way to enable effective information sharing and productivity across the board, as well as ease the burden on storage and accessibility to property documentation. Needing a partner with extensive SharePoint expertise and the ability to deliver on time and within budget, ACC turned to Catapult Systems.

Implementation

Catapult began by conducting workshops with ACC's infrastructure and management team who were especially attuned to proper planning and productivity. Covering topics such as farm architecture, SharePoint roles and responsibilities, back-up and restore strategies, taxonomy, governance and site design, Catapult helped ACC understand user requirements and technology needs necessary for an effective intranet design, compiling all of the information in an Intranet Site Architecture and Design document.

With requirements solidly defined, Catapult created an intranet solution that was largely out-of-the-box, containing only one custom component. This was done intentionally to give ACC a site that could be fully supported internally once it was implemented. Key components of the intranet development included:

Look and Feel:

Using existing marketing materials as a foundation, Catapult did a simple re-design of the

intranet portal. Special attention was paid to property site templates so that the same data was displayed for each one, ensuring consistency and ease of use.

Reporting:

In the past ACC had limited ability to deliver information to area managers, the senior team and staff at the property level. Catapult took the existing reporting infrastructure within ACC's Leasing Application Management System (LAMS) and tied it into the intranet site, giving them the ability to surface relevant information and KPIs.

Search:

Through an enterprise install of a business data catalog, ACC's intranet was connected to the backend of their LAMS application so that everyone, even those who were not LAMS users, could get to the data. Since each property has address data, the search results also returned a map of the location found.

> " Working with Catapult has been great. Throughout the project they provided valuable guidance on what others have done, how to implement and roll out the technology as well as maintain it. The Catapult team didn't hold our hands – they let us have our own creative thoughts and input to the project, and enabled us to be self-sufficient. "

Jeff Barrett
VP of Application Development

Single Sign-On:

To allow ACC to maintain credentials in one location and mitigate password exposure, single sign-on (SSO) was employed in ACC's intranet solution.

Results

ACC reports that productivity has increased tremendously across the board. A key component of this is the enhanced reporting – before if someone wanted to know how a region or property was doing they had to pull one or more reports to gain the data they wanted. Regional managers and the senior team didn't have the ability to understand where their region or area was with regard to pre-leasing and to determine which property was having issues.

With KPIs and dashboards in place, that data is now readily available at a glance. According to Jeff Barrett, VP of Application Development, "Feedback has been outstanding. Property staff isn't having any problems and can now share information among their staff at both the property and corporate level. And, permissions have been a no-brainer with the way we structured them so there's not much to do when people leave or change roles."

The ability to search has also positively impacted productivity. With the intranet's integration in to the back-end of the LAMS application, users can now click through from search to see property details even if they are not a LAMS user.

The success of this project has led ACC to plan a second-phase project to integrate their HR system, incorporate MySites and update site branding.

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How can we help you?
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