

INTERACTIVE SESSION TECHNOLOGY

Arup Moves Project Management to the Cloud

Arup Group Limited is a multinational professional services firm headquartered in London that provides engineering, design, planning, project management, and consulting services for all aspects of structures and environments of human construction. Founded in 1946, Arup now has over 16,000 staff based in 96 offices across 40 countries throughout the globe. The company defines itself as one where professionals of diverse disciplines—engineers, planners, designers, financial experts, consulting specialists, and sustainability professionals—can work together to deliver projects and services of greater quality than by working in isolation. Arup has worked on projects in over 160 countries, including the Pompidou Center in Paris, the Sydney Opera House, and the high-speed railway between London and Paris.

Arup is an intensive user of information technology in all aspects of its work, including working with clients, designing buildings, running structural simulations, and coordinating projects. Its management wants to ensure that Arup's information systems group is working on all the right IT projects for furthering the business and is doing so in the right way. Arup's systems have to be stable, leading edge, and available at all times, with employees able to access the information they need at any time and any place.

Until recently Arup's IT staff relied on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets or Microsoft Word documents as their project management tools. Reports were sporadic and in diverse formats, collaboration was very limited, project delivery styles were inconsistent, and there was no central visibility into what was happening with each project. Arup set up a Global IT Portfolio Management Office to oversee its entire portfolio of IT projects, but it was hampered by having to manually create reports using spreadsheets and email updates from regional offices.

Working with Program Framework consultants who specialize in project portfolio management, Arup decided to adopt Microsoft Project Online to improve project management. Project Online is Microsoft's cloud-based project management tool, and it helps organizations efficiently plan projects, track status, and collaborate with others from any location and any device. Members of Arup's global workforce have immediate access to project data at any time wherever they are working. The cloud solution also makes it possible to report on projects

using live data, with the system able to tie in to other processes such as service and change management.

Program Framework consultants helped Arup implement Project Online and train employees. They also developed a customized Project and Program Status Reporting capability for Project Online.

In the past, Arup's Global IT Portfolio Management Office had to spend 40 hours per month compiling reports manually. By the time it created a status report, the report was already out of date. Project Online gives Arup instant views into the status of all of its IT projects. Regional employees can view their own portfolios of projects, while Arup's Global IT Portfolio Management Office has immediate views of all global projects. Arup's management can examine and classify projects throughout the entire enterprise based on their red, green, and amber status indicators. (Red designates projects with critical status, while amber designates those at risk.) The ability to see Arup's entire project portfolio gives management better insight into project delivery. The Global IT Portfolio Management Office can obtain key project status summaries, and highlight reporting of individual projects where it can drill down for further detail, enabling it to make better decisions based on up-to-date data. Project Online has become essential for supporting a common approach to Arup's project management across the globe. There is less duplication of effort and more strategic value in Arup's overall project portfolio.

Project Online is part of Microsoft's cloud-based Office 365 software suite, so it works seamlessly with other Microsoft productivity and communication tools such as OneDrive for Business (cloud storage), Skype for Business (voice, video, chat), Yammer (enterprise social networking), and Visual Studio Team Foundation Server, which Arup uses for software development projects. Arup also plans to implement additional Project Online capabilities for demand and capacity planning, portfolio prioritization, and portfolio balancing. Users can easily copy information from Project and paste it into Office applications like PowerPoint and Word.

Arup uses Project Online for its IT Project Pipeline, a central repository of ideas for future development. Each idea recorded in the Pipeline requires that the initiator furnish information such as project description, budget, and resource needs.

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Arup's Global IT Portfolio Management Office sends this information to Arup's management committee members to review and prioritize for new initiatives.

When ideas are approved, their Project Pipeline information can easily be transferred to active projects. It only takes a few minutes for Project Pipeline to create a project or program within Project Online. Each has its own Project Details Pages, which include a built-in schedule template and a connected Microsoft SharePoint Server site with document repository and status reporting. This capability saves Arup's Global IT Portfolio Management Office manager Carolyn Bunday several days of work for each new project, creating significant time savings for an annual portfolio of approximately 180 IT projects.

Several years ago, Project Online had about 150 users, but Arup is thinking about providing the tool for all of its employees. Arup licenses three different versions of Project Online. Project managers, owners, and administrators use Project Online with Project Professional for Office 365, enabling them to create and edit project plans inside or outside a web browser. Arup executives use Project Online to re-view project status. Project team members can view assignments or collaborate with other team members using the lower-cost Project Lite version.

Sources: "Engineering Firm Uses Cloud-Based Solution to Generate, Execute, and Monitor IT Projects," www.microsoft.com, accessed January 2, 2018; "Leading Arup at the Forefront of Innovation in Today's Built Environment," www.gineersnow.com, accessed January 3, 2018, and www.arup.com, accessed May 2, 2020.

CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the relationship between information technology, project management, and Arup's business model and business strategy?
2. How does Microsoft Project Online support Arup's business strategy? How did it change the way the company works?
3. What management, organization, and technology issues did Arup have to address when selecting Project Online as its global project portfolio management tool?

14-5 How will MIS help my career?

Here is how Chapter 14 and this book can help you find an entry-level job as an IT project management assistant.

The Company

Focus Multimedia Entertainment, a large multinational mass media and entertainment company headquartered in Dublin, Ireland, is looking for an entry-level IT project management assistant. Focus Multimedia creates films, TV shows, recordings, streaming Internet content, interactive games, and consumer products for a worldwide audience. It is an intensive user of leading-edge information technology in its products, services, and operations.

Position Description

The IT project management assistant will help IT project managers with planning, budgeting, and overseeing all aspects of information technology projects for the firm. Job responsibilities include:

- Performing tasks designed to enhance the functions and services provided by the firm's centralized Project Management Office. This might include