

Case Study: LodgeWorks' Custom Fit On-Demand Project and Task Management Application

Overview

With all the research, planning and work, developing a hotel is hard enough; Doing it five to seven times a year, like LodgeWorks, L.P. will do is quite the feat. With Hotel development comes varying zoning, operational and construction laws, which all factor into the hotel's engineering, design and construction. To be successful, LodgeWorks must keep their hands around all stages of each hotel. Consequently, LodgeWorks employed a Web-based project and task management application created by Model Metrics and DreamFactory.

Challenges

LodgeWorks specializes in building and operating hotels throughout the U.S. in areas with a "high barrier to entry," which require hotel developers to meet additional mandates. Over the next year LodgeWorks will increase their development rate to between five and seven units a year. The growth brings with it, though, project management concerns.

Before Model Metrics and DreamFactory, LodgeWorks kept track of a hotel's development on paper with no automated process for recording project stages or task priorities. "A lot of time was wasted just trying to get information," said Gary Owen, director of IT at LodgeWorks. "We relied on the management of a project being in someone's head."

Initially, Owen tried to leverage the LodgeWorks sales team implementation of salesforce.com. Though accessible via the Web, salesforce.com by itself required employees to scroll through long lists of tasks. Employees complained about the application's organization as well as its lack of visualization and comprehensive overviews.

To help meet development goals, Owen decided they needed an on-demand application with more custom features. So, Owen implored John Barnes, vice president of technology at Model Metrics, to help create a solution.

Solution

When discussing Owen's vision of a project management solution Barnes realized such an application wouldn't be possible solely through salesforce.com. Instead, Barnes demonstrated to Owen the project management application DreamTeam offered by DreamFactory on salesforce.com's AppExchange. Owen liked it. So, Barnes fused salesforce.com's platform, the DreamTeam project management application and a custom application built with DreamFactory by Model Metrics on the salesforce.com platform to create DAD (Development Action Data), a Web-based project and task management application that addressed all of LodgeWorks' needs.

"With DreamFactory," said Barnes, "We were able to set up a user interface that didn't disrupt LodgeWorks' enterprise. DreamFactory has a pre-built salesforce.com library, which makes it a lot easier for development. We couldn't have created the application with Java or .Net."

Rather than scroll through long lists of action items to keep track of a project, DAD simplifies the 500 tasks associated with a hotel's construction into several tabs creating a highly visual, easy to use, central job management solution void of any page scrolling. For example, if LodgeWorks requires a liquor license for a hotel, the project manager logs onto DAD, locates the appropriate tab, and marks the correlating tasks to be fulfilled. Emails, complete with due dates, are then automatically sent to those responsible for undertaking liquor licenses. Once LodgeWorks

acquires the license, it's entered in DAD with any notes or specifications and the task is marked complete. Should upper management at any time want to check in the overall status of a hotel's development, DAD automatically create highly visual charts.

Within months, LodgeWorks was able to implement a fully automated Project Management practice that is custom-fit to their unique requirements. "We see the application as a huge strategic advantage as we continue down the road," said Owen. "There is no one in our organization that isn't touched by it."