

Case Study: Prediction Analytics Uses On Demand DreamTeam for Project Management

Overview

At any given time, Prediction Analytics juggles between 20 and 30 client-related projects for a range of customers that includes large global corporations to small sprouting businesses. Prediction, a subsidiary of Experian, uses a unique combination of software, research and consulting to supply restaurants, retailers, and real estate professionals with critical market forecasts. Consequently, it's imperative everyone at Prediction know the state of a project. Before Jack Hall, project manager, started with Prediction, the retail forecaster relied on an improvised system of spreadsheets, emails and status updates to manage and keep track of projects. Since January of 2006, however, DreamFactory's on-demand teamwork automation application, DreamTeam, has become an integral part at Prediction in making sure all projects fall right into place.

Challenges

Since 1977 Prediction has advised companies on more than 100,000 retail and restaurant locations and no hint of a slow down appears on the horizon. Each client brings with it a multitude of projects, all of which Hall must keep his thumb on. As project manager Hall consistently finds himself reporting to clients and senior executives on various activities including the status of a job, what resources were implemented, how they were utilized and the associated costs.

"We have a complex process in place on our end," said Hall. "With so many projects going on, the biggest headache I had was the unknown."

Determining the stage of a project prior to DreamTeam consisted of sending out a round

of emails while checking status spreadsheets and documents. The manual process proved cumbersome and time consuming requiring anyone wanting to check on the history of a project to "dig" into records.

If the sheer volume of projects and stages weren't enough, the various employees involved in a job's lifecycle added even more fodder to the management process. The production team, the development team, sales personnel and Hall all participate in a project. Subsequently, coordinating meetings and collaborating on developments previously entailed similar manual efforts like those used to gather reports on a project.

Of course, team members traveling or working remotely needed access to records and project data. If unable to connect to Prediction's server, employees away from the office found themselves scrambling to synch up with team members and pass on updates.

One of Hall's first tasks as project manager at Prediction was to streamline project reporting and team collaboration. After looking at desktop and enterprise software solutions Hall opted for Web-based DreamTeam.

Solution

Hall's familiarity with Web applications extends beyond his tenure at Prediction. So much so, even before starting as project manager for the retail forecaster, Hall considered whether to implement salesforce.com at Prediction. He knew he needed a universal platform with high project visibility and reporting capabilities but doubted whether salesforce.com alone could provide such. While researching and comparing alternatives, Hall learned of DreamTeam, available through

salesforce.com's AppExchange. The decision then became obvious.

With DreamTeam, Prediction has a central, online teamwork and project management application accessible anywhere there is an Internet connection. From one source, all records of a project can be seen in overlaying Gantt charts. Now, Hall, a sales representative, or a vice president of the company need only to login into their salesforce.com account to check on the status of a job or sale; no more waiting for email replies or running database searches.

"DreamTeam answers the questions you normally have to ask a lot of people," said Hall. "We're able to execute department-wide a lot faster both high and low level reporting. We need everyone using it."

Many at Prediction use the Web application not just for project status and reporting but coordinating tasks as well. Using DreamTeam's calendaring and document management functions, production and development teams at Prediction organize activities and share documents. Files can now be created, edited and uploaded automatically from salesforce.com through DreamTeam, providing more efficient team and cross-departmental collaboration.

By far, the time saved with DreamTeam is the applications greatest benefit. When assessing software options, Hall determined it would cost as much as \$40,000 to install comparable solutions on Prediction's servers. Instead, the company gets all the increased efficiency for \$40 a year per DreamTeam user without any installation downtime. And if Hall or anyone at Prediction needs an additional feature for better performance, an integrated "suggestion box" lets users pass on insights. DreamFactory then augments the application, effective immediately.

But the effects of DreamTeam extend farther than just within Prediction. In the long run, Hall

foresees the Internet software playing a vital role in improving client relationships. "It's important to have a cutting edge application, like DreamTeam," said Hall. "It helps fulfill promises made to clients."