nib
Health Funds

Major Health Fund Improves Member Service with Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007

Overview

Country or Region: Australia
Industry: Health

Customer Profile
NIB Health Funds Limited is a not-for-profit organization that has been a registered health fund since 1952. It is now Australia's sixth largest health insurance provider with more than 630,000 members.

Business Situation
NIB did not have an easy way to control and publish its intranet content. Business managers had little or no autonomy in publishing material and employees found the site difficult to navigate and use.

Solution
NIB trialed Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 as a unified, integrated platform for employee collaboration, business intelligence, portals, business processes and enterprise content management.

Benefits
- Enhanced service to members.
- Improved employee collaboration.
- Streamlined business processes.
- More consistent internal communication.
- Annual savings of more than A$45,000.

"We are saving an enormous amount of time and, ultimately, money with our publishing. This means that we can do more for our members."

Scott Van Epen, Human Resources Manager, NIB Health Funds

With ambitions to remain Australia's fastest growing health insurer, NIB Health Funds needed to improve the quality of, and access to, business information for its 580-plus employees to improve the quality of service to members and cut downtime. Microsoft Gold Certified Partner Dimension Data conducted a pilot project using Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007 and independent analyst BearingPoint measured the results. NIB says it will now be able to unify its portal and content management so employees can collaborate more effectively and securely, make more informed decisions and better control its intranet publishing – all resulting in higher levels of customer service. Apart from annual productivity savings of more than $45,000, the new platform will also help NIB streamline processes, improve business insight and give its IT employees the tools they need for more efficient server administration and application management.

DIMENSION DATA

Microsoft® Office

Situation

Australia's fastest growing health fund, NIB has consistently built its membership with value-for-money health cover, outstanding service and motivated employees.

To keep winning members, management believes NIB must deliver higher levels of customer service and minimize costs and expenses to maximize the percentage of contributions returned to fund members as benefits. NIB also wants to retain existing members, develop skilled employees and provide a workplace that is rewarding and enjoyable.

NIB's existing intranet, called InSite, is crucial to these goals. InSite is a central source of product, marketing and member-related information that is used by all 580 employees, including call center operators and customer-facing employees in NIB retail centers. It comprises more than 1,000 pages of content and about 20 applications that support the business.

Scott Van Epen, NIB's Human Resources Manager, says InSite has worked well in supporting the organization to sharpen its member focus and to achieve business efficiencies. However, it has its limitations.

"Business owners have never had an easy method of creating content for the site," says Van Epen. "All content development and publishing is managed by two people who rattle the organization's trees for useful information.

"The content these two individuals develop often has to go through several cycles of revisions before an approved version is available, causing unnecessary delays in publication. It also forces them to police compliance with branding, format standards and language – all best done by the business units themselves.

"We wanted to make the intranet the primary face for all internal communications within NIB and to give business managers, editors and authors more capability and autonomy."

NIB employees told management that InSite was difficult to navigate and search, with multiple movements between pages needed to find related information. It was difficult for NIB to monitor usage and know which categories of information were not being accessed or were surplus to the organization's needs.

Joe Grgas, NIB's Intranet Communications Manager, says there was no reliable mechanism for tracking versions of content. This made it difficult to trace the impact of new policies, working procedures or changes to the member management and claims management processes on key performance indicators such as member acquisition and retention or employee satisfaction.

"When you produce an intranet for an organization of this size, you become a publisher," says Grgas. "We needed a tool that would allow people to publish content themselves while ensuring it was correct.

"We wanted to centralize our publishing to make sure people were not publishing unnecessary information or information that could be inflammatory, discriminatory or contrary to our brand."

Solution

NIB's technical partner and Microsoft Gold Certified Partner Dimension Data used Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 as the basis of a pilot project to provide a new intranet that addresses many of NIB's internal communications issues.

National Business Manager at Dimension Data, Peter Menadue, says Office SharePoint

Server 2007 has more advanced functionality for structuring content and document management than the current InSite intranet.

It provides:
- A more effective means for information providers to create and review content in HTML, Microsoft Office Word or PDF formats.
- A workflow that allows proper evaluation, version and content tracking.
- A better-integrated user experience with other Microsoft Office applications such as Office Word, Office Excel and Office InfoPath®.
- Easy integration with legacy systems such as InSite that need to be maintained.

"We have always been happy using Microsoft technologies and that's one of the reasons Office SharePoint Server 2007 is such an easy fit for NIB," says Grgas. "As far as content management goes, Office SharePoint Server 2007 should handle automatically things we needed to manually write code for in the past.

"Also, Microsoft is a well-known brand. It is a company we have used before and we know it delivers in the product areas we are utilizing. We believe in the product. The elements we have tested really suit what we need and where we want to take our intranet. We could not be more pleased with the results."

Benefits

As part of the pilot project, Microsoft engaged independent business analyst BearingPoint to measure the potential impact of the Microsoft solution. BearingPoint reported that the pilot project demonstrated a number of measurable benefits.

Enhanced Service to Members and Streamlined Business Processes

The pilot project has identified how NIB can achieve many of its strategic objectives by using Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007. It will improve the quality of service to current and potential members by helping employees provide prompt and accurate advice about products and the conditions attached to them.

NIB can create versions of updates to policies and procedures, providing further transparency to employees and members. It has improved the quality of its information by using streamlined content creation processes that will help ensure advice to members is accurate and up to date. Faster processes will also reduce the cost and complexity of providing and supporting ICT services for the organization.

The new intranet will play a role in helping employees align their attitude to NIB's desired cultural values – accountability, commitment, continuous improvement, employee satisfaction and member satisfaction.

It will also improve NIB's image in the marketplace and among its current and potential employees, presenting NIB as a modern and forward-looking company.

"The other advantages in piloting this tool are the flow-on effects," says Van Epen. "Two of the most significant will be with our Internet site and our extranet program – the sites we develop for corporate customers. There is a huge opportunity here for us.

"Our corporate sales people are very keen to become part of a pilot program and even our IT employees who run our Web site want to be involved. The intranet is a test case for a couple of significant areas within our organization. So we're really pleased with

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how the tool has performed because we see advantages in using it in other areas of our business."

Better Compliance with Internal and External Regulations

Giving employees and members access to better quality information will reduce risk, increase transparency and help NIB comply with a variety of legislation, regulation and internal policies, as well as help the organization meet its responsibilities to the NIB Board of Directors.

"We cannot overplay the importance of information quality for an organization like NIB," says Grgas. "We face many legislative requirements regarding our information, so accuracy is paramount."

Says Van Epen: "The new intranet will help our compliance with legislation governing private health insurance, equal employment opportunity, industrial relations, privacy and occupational health and safety.

"It also means we can work smarter in complying with statutory reporting requirements to the Australian Government or the NIB Board and in meeting regulatory requirements on security and control of access to member or personnel information.

"A central and easy-to-access repository of up-to-date policies, working procedures and guides gives employees the support they need to comply with these requirements, thereby reducing risk to our organization.

"Our overall aim is to ensure our intranet is the vehicle for delivering all internal communications at NIB and that employees rely on it as a source of up-to-date and accurate information.

"This pilot has reinforced the need to have some type of content management tool that enables us to have workflow version control to provide valuable and pertinent information that assists our employees and eventually, our customers."

Improved Employee Collaboration and Internal Communication

The new intranet allows business users at NIB to create and edit content using simple page layout templates and, subject to review and sign-off, publish that content themselves without the need for technical input.

"Our authors have all commented on how user friendly it is," says Grgas. "The flexibility of this whole authoring process, how to trigger our workflow, how to put things in and out of draft form, is fantastic. We haven't had that before. They love using these features."

The NIB intranet will continue to grow as a single repository for all the information employees need to do their work and make that information easily searchable. This will avoid fruitless searches and reduce the number of times employees need to ask for help in finding what they need. It will also foster communication between different business units.

Grgas says all business users accessing the new intranet can be confident that the information displayed is the most recent version and can be relied on as a sound basis for advising members or internal decision making.

"With our current intranet, we have 1,000 pages of content but, more importantly, attached to that are about 20 applications that support our business, as well as other customized applications," he says.

"With Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007, we can import all 1,000 pages and most of the applications. That will allow us to

manage our intranet through one application, as opposed to the several we use now.

"Also, the security is more granular so you can go down to the individual document; you don't have to create a new library every time you want to get a different set of users looking at something. Things like that are extremely important."

Annual Savings of More than $45,000

The new intranet reduces the time call center operators and customer-facing employees in retail centers spend searching for what they need – either to answer member queries or make their own decisions.

It provides faster access to knowledge and cuts the time employees spend searching for information. In particular, there is scope for greater usage of the intranet in retail centers as a knowledge base and as the first line of support.

For example, the easy availability of electronic forms will deliver efficiencies in areas such as requests for approval of training and similar workflow processes.

Automated workflows for creating and approving content have generated time savings of more than 70 percent for some business units. Quicker access to information has given call center consultants and retail employees more time to focus on providing quality service to members.

NIB has reduced the time its intranet communications manager and intranet coordinator spend on creating and publishing content, allowing them to focus on tasks such as developing further workflows or educating users in obtaining the best from the site. Their total time saving is between 35 and 40 hours per week, which translates to an annual cost saving of up to A$41,088.

The new automated content authoring, review and approval process has also helped content authors in various business units save more than two hours per week – an annual cost saving of up to A$2,304 each. At NIB, more than half the average of 50 calls taken daily by about 80 call center consultants involve use of the intranet. With access to more precise and structured information, NIB consultants are saving up to 4.5 hours per week, which could deliver an annual saving of nearly A$4,500.

"We are saving an enormous amount of time and, ultimately, money with our publishing," says Van Epen. "This means that we can do more for our members.

"Previously, the process involved contacting the intranet team, putting something together in an Office Word document, sending it to a business unit manager for approval, getting it back, taking it from Office Word, loading it into our publishing system and sending it back to the intranet team for publishing.

"Now, they create and edit the document and it goes through a simple workflow before being published. It's a very powerful change and our authors love it. They do not have to endure a long-winded publishing process.

"There has been no drop in quality. If anything, quality has improved. The workflow process ensures that all the right people see what they need to see before a document is published."

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