

Software for the Agile Business.



Tablet PC enables people to work in flexible and intuitive ways

Company Profile

PeopleSoft

Established in 1987, PeopleSoft is the world's leading provider of application software for the real-time enterprise. More than 4,800 organisations use PeopleSoft's pure Internet software to reduce costs and increase productivity by directly connecting customers, suppliers, partners and employees to business processes online, in real time. PeopleSoft's integrated, best-in-class applications include Customer Relationship Management, Supply Chain Management, Human Capital Management, Financial Management and application integration.

PeopleSoft's global headquarters is in California, but their services are delivered to 140 countries through an extensive network of offices around the world. By moving business processes to the internet and connecting people to those processes in real-time, with PeopleSoft organisations can reduce their IT costs, operate more efficiently, improve productivity, and increase profits.

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Responsible to the both the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Tony Abbott MP, and the Minister for Employment Services, Mal Brough MP, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) aims to maximise the ability of unemployed Australians to find work, and to support strong employment growth and improved productive performance of enterprises in Australia.

With operating groups located in all State and Territory capitals and in a number of regional locations, the Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio includes a number of portfolio agencies and services that operate as separate entities within the department. The organisation develops and implements policies and programs that support an effectively functioning labour market and workplaces with higher productivity and higher pay.

Business Scenario

Despite some obvious differences between the two organisations, there are many similarities in the way they harness technology to manage their day-to-day operations, as well as the way their employees interact with each other and with the technology around them.

Glen Wareing, Enterprise Architect, sums up one of the common threads: "The use and role of technology in DEWR is critical to the delivery of our services. Because we are such a large Government agency and we are spread across Australia, we have a large number of

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Allen Kenner,
Senior Manager,
PeopleSoft

Organisation

PeopleSoft

Web Site

www.peoplesoft.com.au

Industry

Enterprise Application Software

Organisation

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Web Site

www.dewr.gov.au

Industry

Government

employees in disparate locations. We use wide area networks, LANs, and some of our offices are connected through satellite communications. The use of this technology helps us with the delivery goals of the organisation. It also helps us to be able to communicate our message to all of our staff and employees, no matter where they are in Australia."

As a global organisation, PeopleSoft share similar goals of communication across vast distances and the effective delivery of a message to their customers. With the impending release of Microsoft's Tablet PC platform, both organisations were invited to take part in an early evaluation program of this new technology with Toshiba, to examine ways in which the device might support and enhance their corporate goals.

Business Solution

The Tablet PC platform is supported by a number of hardware vendors, each producing machines optimised to take advantage of the operating system, Microsoft® Windows® Professional Tablet PC Edition. DEWR and PeopleSoft both used the new Toshiba Portege 3500. Designed as a convertible notebook computer, the Toshiba Tablet PC can be operated as a conventional notebook computer, with a full-sized keyboard and 12.1 inch screen. However, the device can be quickly and easily converted to Tablet mode thanks to a distinctive swivel mechanism at the base of the screen which allows it to rotate through 180 degrees and then fold down flat. Once locked into place, the screen can then be used as a writing area for direct, pen-based input.

Catering to individual needs

DEWR's Wareing states, "The reason DEWR are interested in trying out new technologies like the Tablet PCs is so we can best evaluate how they may integrate within our organisation ... the use of handwriting recognition and voice recognition may provide advantages to some of our staff, rather than working purely with keyboards as alternative input capabilities."

A more natural form of note-taking

The most stunning feature of the new Tablet PC is its ability to accurately interpret a user's handwriting using "digital ink" technology. The ability for people to interact with the device using their own handwriting rather than typing, offers a powerful new way of working with computers.

Allen Kenner, a senior manager at PeopleSoft's Sydney office, explains: "We want people to be able to work in more natural ways. It makes more sense that we should have technology that adapts to the person, rather than requiring the person to adapt to the technology. Handwriting is just a far more intuitive form of interface." DEWR's Technical Director for Desktop Services, Steve Sanders, agrees with Kenner, adding "Writing is a far more natural form of note-taking."

Benefits

Kenner is enthusiastic about the possibilities for Tablet PC within PeopleSoft. "What I really liked about the Tablet was the way it enabled me to communicate in a freeform way as well as a structured way. By that, I mean I could use the Tablet to give a PowerPoint® presentation using pre-prepared slides, but if the need arose during the meeting to explain or expand on a particular point I could instantly switch to pen

Business Scenario Summary

With their shared needs communication of collaboration throughout their organisations, both DEWR and PeopleSoft saw the Tablet PC as an enabling technology for freeing their people from the limitations of the keyboard interface. The Tablet's enhanced mobility and flexibility was offered attractive possibilities.

Business Solution Summary

Both organisations tried out the Tablet PC and found its ability to accurately interpret handwriting to be a useful tool for the corporate environment.

mode - drawing diagrams, adding arrows or whatever was needed to make the point clearer."

Working in the technology business, Kenner often finds himself sketching out ideas - network layouts, interactions between software components, etc. He finds himself dealing with many concepts that are simply much easier to communicate with a quick diagram than with words, yet standard word processing software lacks the ability to effectively capture these schematic thoughts because it is typically driven by a keyboard or mouse. The pen-based interface of the Tablet PC creates a much more direct form of interaction.

Lee Terrell, a PeopleSoft colleague of Kenner's, also took an interest in the possibilities of the Tablet PC and was equally impressed by its intuitive interface. "When you communicate with others, you don't just think with your brain - you also think with your hands and your eyes - Tablet PC enables that", he says.

Evidence of this activity can be found on the many whiteboards scattered through PeopleSoft's Sydney office. Sketches, diagrams and ideas are drawn on the whiteboards in the boardroom, left over from previous meetings. "What Tablet PC lets us do is to capture those ideas permanently and then use and share them in a digital form", says Terrell. "A Tablet PC hooked up to a data projector would let us create those diagrams and ideas directly in a digital format and then capture them at the end of the meeting, ready to save or email. That ability to stay digital is would be very powerful."

Full searching facility in handwritten text

DEWR's Sanders was equally impressed with the device's ability to capture and store documents created in a handwritten format. "One of the major benefits of the tablet is that you can store a large number of handwritten documents. You can then go back and search within those documents for individual written words, phrases, full text, even documents themselves. Searching within the Tablet is extremely easy," he says.

This searchability aspect of handwritten text is one of the Tablet's more amazing features. Although the software allows handwritten text to be converted to regular text with stunning accuracy, there are lots of advantages in leaving it in its handwritten form. It means that diagrams and drawings, arrows leading from one point to another, and text circled or highlighted can be left in its native form. A keyword search will still find a given word, even though it remains handwritten. This feature offers particular benefits to executive staff who may prefer to write rather than type. They have all the benefits of working in a handwritten mode while retaining all the benefits of creating in a digital form.

The best of both worlds

The other significant benefit for both DEWR and PeopleSoft would be the device's portability and adaptability. The hybrid nature of the Toshiba device makes it perfect for users needing to have both input modes. "While the pen input is fabulous, I can also see that in certain applications, such as software coding, for example, it may sometimes be better to have access to a regular keyboard," says Kenner. "The Toshiba Tablet PC would give us the best of both worlds".

Partner Details

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Benefits

Offering a far more natural and intuitive means of interaction with a PC, the Tablet changed the ways in which corporate communication could take place. The ability to draw, sketch and show diagrams enabled more freedom of expression and less rigid structure in the way ideas were able to be communicated.

The digital nature of the device also meant that these handwritten ideas could be easily captured and integrated into the existing digital infrastructures.

Sanders observes that many of DEWR's regional staff often require the ability to travel and move from client to client, so the light weight and convenient size of the Tablet PC makes that task much easier.

Technology

The Toshiba Tablet PC has a number of features designed to enable its use as a powerful hybrid machine. Toshiba's Worldwide Designer and Product Manager, Laurie White, says the Toshiba Tablet was created to offer all the advantages of the new Tablet PC Edition of the Windows XP Professional operating system, without sacrificing any of the power and performance of a mainstream notebook. "The Toshiba Tablet is a very good notebook computer in its own right, but we've added a number of unique features that turn it into an excellent Tablet as well," he says. The devices ship with standard features like built-in wireless networking using 802.11 technologies, GPRS connectivity and integrated slots for SD card expansion, as well as a modular options for built-in Bluetooth.

"We also feel that having the slightly bigger screen is an advantage for our users, especially since the machine really is designed to be used effectively in both notebook and Tablet form factors."

Some very clever thinking

Another clever and unique aspect of the Toshiba design is its power and heat management features. With a 1.3 GHz processor, the device potentially generates a lot of heat, so Toshiba turned to its refrigeration division for help. The resulting technology was a water-cooled chip which uses remote heat dissipation, an interesting piece of engineering for a computer, but one which allows a much faster processor to be employed.

Other unique technology features, such as a specially developed polysilicon display to resist flexing of the ultra thin screen, and a patented Lithium Polymer battery that can be made exceptionally thin, all add up to make a device brimming with technical innovation.

Maximising Success

The Tablet PC is powered by Windows XP Tablet PC Edition, a superset of features that extend the standard Windows XP operating system. This ensures that integration into the corporate environments of both PeopleSoft and DEWR was a seamless and straightforward task. The devices immediately picked up the existing networks, enabling users to connect and access resources without any problems. For Sanders, the current desktop environment in DEWR is Windows XP Professional, so, from a user's perspective, the transition to Tablet PC was completely transparent.

The Future

Both DEWR and PeopleSoft have seen significant positives from their experience with the Toshiba Tablet PC and see a range of future applications for its use within their individual environments.

Microsoft Technology

- Microsoft Windows XP Professional Tablet PC Edition

Other Technology

- Toshiba Portege 3500 Tablet PC



For more information

For more information about Microsoft products or services in Australia, contact Microsoft on 13 20 58. To access information via the Web, go to www.microsoft.com/australia/business

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