



A Search for New Services



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WYNDHAM INTERNATIONAL HOTELS

2005 COMPUTERWORLD HONORS CASE STUDY

BUSINESS

THE COMPLETE BUILDING LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT FOR WYNDHAM INTERNATIONAL HOTELS, FROM PLANNING, BUDGETING, DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND ONGOING FACILITIES MANAGEMENT IS COORDINATED THROUGH SYSTEMS INTEGRATION AND WEB COLLABORATION. [20055281]

SUMMARY

The complete building lifecycle management (BLM), from planning, budgeting, design, construction and ongoing facilities management is coordinated through systems integration and web collaboration.

APPLICATION

Wyndham International, Inc. (AMEX: WBR) offers upscale and luxury hotel and resort accommodations through proprietary lodging brands and a management services division. Based in Dallas, Wyndham International owns, leases, manages and franchises hotels in the United States, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Europe and guarantees that the best rates for its properties will be found on its proprietary Web site. Wyndham is a founding member of the Global Hotel Alliance, a worldwide union of hospitality companies that provides guests with unique, personalized guest services.

As a major hotel owner and operator Wyndham International is responsible for providing our millions of guests a year with an enjoyable and memorable stay at our hotels. A very significant component of that experience will be based upon the physical condition of the property at which they are staying. Obviously then, Wyndham is willing to spend a substantial effort in time and money to provide an attractive and comfortable facility. The two major thrusts of this effort to preserve and enhance the hotels are: repair and maintenance, which is usually a smaller scale activity based at the hotel; and capital projects, which are much larger both in terms of money and time.

Wyndham controls virtually all of its capital spending from its corporate headquarters in Dallas. Given the diversity of possible physical needs of each hotel, easy, two-way communication is essential between Wyndham's corporate office and individual properties. As might be expected with over 100 properties, the volume of capital projects to be managed is incredible. Wyndham plans and executes almost 1,000 individual capital projects annually, from basic physical improvements to carpeting, HVAC systems repair, painting, and room remodels. At the same time every year, the general manager at each property completes a capital plan that must be accessible to a wide array of people in the organization. And as projects evolve, monthly status reports must be disseminated.

At Wyndham International we look at technology as a way to optimize the guest experience and improve the way we do business. Naturally we sought to apply technology to assist in the accomplishing with capital projects. One of the keys in this process is that as we develop systems to address each task they be integrated into a whole. The primary reason we looked into web collaboration was that we needed a tool to smooth communications and keep us connected. Among the criteria for tools for our development are the capability to move and use data from any point within the value chain at any time, and an infrastructure that enables the sharing of information throughout the enterprise.

Web collaboration seemed to be the best alternative because of the simplicity of the user interface. We didn't have to teach our people a whole new system, because all of this information would be available by simply using a web browser. Wyndham decided to begin using web collaboration as a part of building lifecycle management in 2000. Since then we have been using web collaboration for much more than just the management of construction projects. We have had 300 people at 100 different locations using it — architects, contractors, property managers, and accountants — to exchange critical information in a number of different formats. In fact, the entire design process for Wyndham's new Louisville Airport Hotel was done using web collaboration.

BENEFITS

Prior to adopting the web collaboration service, simply sending out the forms needed to begin the capital project planning process was time-consuming, and the task of keeping everyone in the “paper loop” as projects progressed was gargantuan. Initiating the annual capital planning project now takes three days, where it used to take three full weeks. The process was also costly: we were spending \$3,000 per month just to photocopy the status reports and, of course, that mountain of paper had to be delivered all over the world. We’re also saving on shipping documents and spending less on travel to project sites.

Time and money aside, through our use of systems integration and web collaboration we have improved the quality of the data, reduced duplication and benefited from better project collaboration and management. What’s even more to the point is that we have reduced the distance between the users at the hotels and the managers in the corporate office. Before we began this they had no idea where to look for information about projects and their hotel’s lifecycle plan. Now they know where to look. It’s always been about enhancing that communication.

IMPORTANCE

Our web collaboration site is being used to manage projects and collaborate year-round, but during capital planning season at Wyndham, use is heavy throughout the organization. Forms in a variety of formats - Microsoft Excel, Access, and Word - are entered into each property’s project site. The property manager’s fill out the forms, and decision-makers in Dallas consider and collaborate with the properties and each other on the plans. As approved capital projects progress, status reports are maintained in the project site. We are using Autodesk® Buzzsaw™ technologies to build our solution. We are extremely pleased with the end result as an interactive communication tool. We just set permission levels, and any user with a legitimate interest in a project can access real-time information about the status of the work. It couldn’t have happened without these web technologies.

ORIGINALITY

By expanding the use of web collaboration beyond project management to building lifecycle management, Wyndham is changing the way its people work together. We are using web collaboration over an incredibly broad spectrum and extending collaboration throughout our entire organization. It allows us to bring the expertise of our most experienced people to bear on almost every project. Very senior people are able to share knowledge across the United States, the Caribbean, and beyond.

Using Wyndham’s web collaboration project website as a document repository and intra-enterprise communications medium, Wyndham has been able to automate its annual capital planning process, eliminating nearly all accompanying paperwork and shortening the initial distribution process of preparing and issuing capital planning instructions from approximately three weeks to three days.

Working with Autodesk we created custom forms based upon databases within the web site’s structure. Using these customized forms created at corporate headquarters in Dallas, facility managers in the field are able to submit information on budgets, work scope and schedules directly through Autodesk® Buzzsaw™ back to management. This paperless process has provided the hotel chain with up-to-the-minute visibility into the progress of projects throughout the enterprise.

To our knowledge this was the first time in the hospitality industry that the capital project planning process has been automated using web collaboration technologies. We are also in the forefront with the work ticket, project planning, estimating, scheduling and accounting that we are integrating into a comprehensive BLM system.

SUCCESS

Wyndham’s commitment to improving performance through technology is borne out by its winning of the CIO-100 Award in both 2001 and 2002. Presented by CIO magazine, the award identifies companies that exemplify the integrated enterprise.

Rather than printing and physically distributing monthly status reports that highlight the execution of each hotel’s capital plan—each report comprising hundreds of pages—Wyndham now simply posts the documents to its web collaboration project website site where they can be accessed by the more than 300 users within the company. Distributing digital information in lieu of traditional forms has other impacts as well. As John Campbell, Senior Vice-President for Project Management says, “There’s a whole forest of trees that wasn’t cut down in the last three years because of our web collaboration service.”

Wyndham's use of Autodesk® Buzzsaw™ to improve its capital planning is a logical extension of the service's core project collaboration capabilities. We believe in the years to come that many more organizations will recognize the advantages of leveraging digital building information across the entire enterprise, from the earliest design phases through to property management and onward. This will make Building Lifecycle Management the primary way in which owners view their real estate assets.

DIFFICULTY

Those of us involved in this systems development and utilization at Wyndham International are coming from the viewpoint of "users" as opposed to developers and/or administrators of systems. This has given us a certain "the end users justify the means" attitude that we think has made for more pragmatic decisions regarding the final end user. We are the users, but so are the housekeepers and accountants and engineers. So whatever we are doing must be based on the lowest common denominators, easily understandable and accessible. Transferring a high tech solution to this paradigm is full of difficulties. Designers and developers have a tendency to exercise the tyranny of "best computer practices" even when they stand in the way of achieving the best solution for the user. We are always working to arrive at a solution that addresses the end user needs.

Delivering an ASP solution to a large corporation such as Wyndham International with all of its standard procedures proved to quite difficult as well. This is both from an IT administrator's and an accountant's standpoint. With our long-term commitment to Autodesk® Buzzsaw™ technologies for our solution we have overcome some of those objections.