

Driving Operational Efficiencies in Tourism Ireland

(Cost Reduction, Efficiencies, Reporting, Business Intelligence and Collaboration)

Audience

Finance Managers, Marketing Managers, Business Line Managers, IT Managers

Situation

Tourism Ireland was established under the framework of the Belfast Agreement of Good Friday and is jointly funded by the two governments and is accountable to the North South Ministerial Council. Tourism Ireland is responsible for marketing the island of Ireland overseas as a premier tourist destination. The organisation has the twin goals of promoting increased tourism to the island of Ireland and of supporting the tourism industry in Northern Ireland to reach its potential. It engages in strategic destination marketing on a worldwide basis to achieve these goals. Tourism Ireland undertakes regional/product marketing and promotional activities on behalf of Failte Ireland and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board through its overseas offices.

Tourism Ireland recognised the need to develop an internal web based system to manage, report and showcase the multitude of worldwide marketing activities for which they are responsible. This system would need to support staff at Tourism Ireland's head offices in Dublin and Coleraine, while also supporting the overseas marketing offices in Great Britain, USA, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland Austria, Italy, Nordics, Spain, Canada, Australia, South Africa, China, India Japan, New Zealand and United Arab Emirates.

Given the need for increasing efficiencies within the organisation, the system would also have to eliminate a number of manual processes and facilitate the sharing of ideas, methodologies and best practices across the various markets. In addition, it would have to include a reporting function allowing top-level reports be generated for operational and financial management purposes.

Solution

Following a number of unsatisfactory attempts to find a solution to meet these requirements, Tourism Ireland turned to Central Solutions for help in designing and implementing such a system. On reviewing Tourism Ireland's needs, Central Solutions identified Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 as the platform best suited to satisfy them. From their extensive experience of working on the Microsoft SharePoint platform, the team at Central Solutions were able to provide Tourism Ireland with a cost effective solution that could be deployed rapidly.

With its integrated suite of capabilities, SharePoint has helped Tourism Ireland improve organisational efficiency, facilitated the sharing of Marketing Activity information across geographical boundaries and also provided the ability to undertake comprehensive content management and enterprise searches.

As the core platform in the solution is an “out-of-the-box” application, minimal bespoke development was necessary. With fewer integration concerns and consequently less chance of technical complications, this resulted in very competitive up-front and overall lifetime costs.

By leveraging the Business Intelligence features of SharePoint and integrating with Tourism Ireland’s existing applications, the new system provides the key Marketing

Activity performance metrics which are essential to making well informed day-to-day management decisions. These metrics are also invaluable in the planning process for all future marketing activities.

The familiar, intuitive and uncomplicated navigation of the web based interface offers Tourism Ireland colleagues the ability to easily share and report on all marketing activities in a secure environment from anywhere in the world.

Benefits

Efficiency and cost saving: Improved operational efficiencies and the elimination of a number of manual steps has resulted in the saving of both time and money. Time spent by Tourism Ireland staff searching for information and generating reports has been reduced significantly.

Drives Productivity: The instant availability of marketing activity performance results speeds up the management decision-making process, eliminates unproductive field activity and ultimately results in improved return on marketing investment.

Supports the planning process: Centralising the planning process allows all key stakeholders to participate in it simultaneously. The availability of high level reporting and performance metrics enables the future planning and decision-making process. Being able to quickly and easily compare results from different activities has increased the efficiency of the planning process itself.

Quick and instant access to information: Instant access to information for employees located in offices across the globe. The permissions-based system ensures that staff see only the information relevant to their particular job.

Knowledge Base and Collaboration: Key learnings from previous marketing activities are available at the click of a button. Staff in different markets can easily share the ideas and methodologies they have employed on previous campaigns. Having this information centralised saves people time in the preparation of their new activities.

Summary

As the old cliché says “Time is Money”. Tourism Ireland acknowledge that the greater efficiencies in their business processes resulting from the SharePoint solution deployed by Central Solutions ultimately translate into savings in cost.