



SarasAmerica helps major financial services Company migrate to SharePoint 2007

The Client

Market leader in insurance and investment products

Products: Mutual funds, annuities, etc.

Number of employees: 45,000

The Challenge

The previous SharePoint infrastructure (2003) was in disarray due to lack of rigorous, documented processes and sorely needed to be brought up to date.



The Tools

Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 (MOSS)

Metalogix SharePoint Site Migration manager

Microsoft Visual Studio .Net 2005

ASP.Net, C#



The Solution

SarasAmerica provided personnel to migrate SharePoint 2003 to SharePoint 2007, and helped to establish and document best practices around the system.

The Results

A smooth implementation that went without a hitch from beginning to end, with no loss of data or downtime for employees.

SarasAmerica helps major financial Services Company migrate to SharePoint 2007

More and more companies today recognize the power of Web Content Management systems, and are implementing them to improve project management and document sharing across their organizations.

But many of these companies are also discovering it takes more than a software system to realize efficiencies — it takes the right implementation and the right processes in place.



That was the challenge faced by a major financial services company that implemented Microsoft SharePoint 2003 several years ago. While the system was functioning fine, it was flying blind, with no processes in place to guide it.

Within a few short years, the SharePoint system had become bloated and unwieldy. The websites lacked organization; there was a lack of security, and a lack of overall cohesion in the infrastructure

Pinpointing problem areas

“Their existing SharePoint infrastructure was in real disarray when we arrived,” says Keith Lopez, Senior SharePoint Developer at SarasAmerica and the consultant heading up the recent SharePoint project at the financial services company. “They hadn’t documented or implemented defined roles for users; so essentially, they didn’t know who had access to what.”

While the lack of role definition caused problems in and of itself; more critically, it trickled over into more serious issues. Keith explains: “The hierarchy of sites didn’t match their business requirements. Many sites had been created under the root: there were at least 30 or 40 sites under it. The infrastructure wasn’t load-balanced, so it wasn’t scalable: it was implemented on one server, so if they wanted to add memory, they had to shut down the server and add more hard disk. Finally, the company had no real disaster recovery procedure in place, leaving them very vulnerable in the event of data loss.”

In essence, the company did what so many others have done: they started using the technology — a powerful technology that empowers users with many valuable tools — without establishing best practices to guide end-users and create a solid infrastructure.

Migration to SharePoint 2007

To solve their infrastructure problems, the company decided to kill two birds with one stone: they would migrate to SharePoint 2007 and take advantage of the opportunity to clean up the previous maze of sites.

SharePoint specialist Keith Lopez of Saras America led the migration project at the financial services company, with ad hoc help from two other SharePoint specialists to establish best practices. The project was meticulously planned, with planning starting four months ahead of actual implementation.

“I have extensive experience in migrating from SharePoint 2003 to SharePoint 2007, so I know very well the problems companies need to address before a migration starts and the problems they could potentially face following it,” Keith says.

A methodical, well-planned project

To begin with, Keith created a Windows application that took inventory of all the existing sites. The application included a history on each site, such as when they were created and by whom.

Keith then worked with the Chief Systems Administrator at the financial services company to analyze the inventory with all the business users. These users decided how the new sites would be grouped in SharePoint for the various business units.

This stage was particularly important, as the company had decided to split out the cost of the system across departments. The more a department used the system, the more they would pay. “SharePoint provides usage statistics, so it makes it easy to determine which departments are using the system most,” Keith explains.

While SharePoint 2007 provides two built-in migration tools for migrating from SharePoint 2003 to 2007, on Keith’s advice, the company opted to get third-party software, Metalogix SharePoint Site Migration Manager, to conduct the migration. “They didn’t want to use the in-built tools, because that would have required bringing over all the sites at once,” Keith explains. “So I proposed a method of doing the migration site by site. We documented the entire hierarchy of how they wanted it done on the new server.”

On-time and on-budget, with no downtime for end-users

The project started in the beginning of November, with one business unit per day being migrated over to the new system. They allowed for buffer days between each unit's migration and finished up by December 12, their projected date of completion. "They wanted it finished by the beginning of December, before everyone left for the Christmas vacation," says Keith.

The migration went almost entirely as planned, an incredibly smooth transition that was almost invisible to its end-users. "It really was a very smooth transition, with very few unforeseen problems, no important data loss, and no loss of time for users," says Keith.

"I had to work an extra Saturday or two, but the company had budgeted for this extra time already. The migration really went off without a hitch, thanks to the planning."

True experts in Microsoft SharePoint technology

Keith also provided specialized training and documentation to the financial services company. He worked with a technical writer to create three manuals that end-users at the financial services company could consult, to ensure best practices continue at their site.

With the right processes in place, the financial services company is now flying straight, with a solid infrastructure to get maximum use from their SharePoint system. And SarasAmerica's SharePoint expertise was the perfect launch pad to get them there. "We've been working with the foundation version of SharePoint since Microsoft came out with it in 1999," says Keith. "All our consultants have a strong .NET background, and have worked on all areas of SharePoint from custom web part development to configuration and installation to custom solution development. We're in an excellent position to help companies get to where they want with SharePoint."