



Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Energy

Customer Profile

RED works with industrial manufacturing companies to profitably reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by developing and operating energy recycling facilities.

Business Situation

RED needed an enterprise-class document management system to help manage its complex, multiyear, multimillion-dollar contracts, but it did not have the resources to support such a system in-house.

Solution

RED worked with PointBridge to deploy Microsoft SharePoint Online, part of the Microsoft Business Productivity Online Suite from Microsoft Online Services.

Benefits

- Enterprise-grade document management capabilities
- No internal infrastructure to support
- Low cost of entry
- Environmentally responsible solution

RED Saves Green Using Online Document Management Service

“The SharePoint Online solution...was significantly more attractive than an in-house approach because it offered a lower cost of ownership, yet the same benefits and features.”

Aaron Walters, CFO, Recycled Energy Development

Each Recycled Energy Development (RED) project involves complex, multimillion-dollar contracts that need to be negotiated, controlled, maintained, and audited carefully. Over time, RED recognized that it needed a better way to manage these documents, but it could not afford to divert its financial or human resources to support a full-service in-house document management infrastructure. Microsoft® Gold Certified partner PointBridge came up with a better approach using Microsoft SharePoint® Online, part of the Business Productivity Online Suite from Microsoft Online Services. Microsoft Online Services delivers the functionality RED needs without the upfront capital expense it wanted to avoid.

“SharePoint Online was very attractive to RED and made the decision very easy.”

Aaron Walters, CFO, Recycled Energy Development (RED)

Situation

Recycled Energy Development (RED) stands at the forefront of clean energy production. It partners with industrial manufacturers to build facilities that capture waste energy and recycle it into clean electricity and heat, usually without burning additional fuel or emitting additional pollution. For the companies with which it forms partnerships, RED reduces energy costs and offers the opportunity for emissions credits.

Each partner's facilities pose unique challenges. As it begins to form a partnership, RED models several approaches for a single manufacturing site. RED may also be working with multiple partners and multiple sites at the same time, which makes its document management needs that much more complex.

“Working through all the contract negotiations and the engineering drawings and specifications, keeping track of and controlling all the different versions of all the different solutions—this is a serious challenge,” says RED CFO Aaron Walters.

“Inadequate document management leads to serious financial implications. Moreover, since we are negotiating 20 and 25-year contracts, there is a significant amount of work associated with tracking, controlling, maintaining, and auditing each contract's different pieces.”

The consultant supporting RED's Microsoft Dynamics accounting system listened to Walters talk about the business's complexity and suggested that Walters talk to Microsoft Gold-Certified partner PointBridge about a custom-built document management solution based on Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007. Walters contacted PointBridge and quickly grew excited about the benefits that this solution could bring to the company.

Walters's excitement was tempered, however, when he tallied the costs associated with this solution. The cost of the infrastructure to support an in-house Office SharePoint Server installation was not in his capital projects budget, nor did he have the human resources on hand to support and administer this kind of solution.

PointBridge, however, saw another way to meet RED's needs. It came back to Walters and proposed the same custom-built document management system—but proposed running it in an environment hosted by Microsoft using SharePoint Online, part of the Business Productivity Online Suite from Microsoft Online Services.

Solution

The Business Productivity Online Suite includes Microsoft Exchange Online, Office Live Meeting, Microsoft Office Communications Online, and Microsoft SharePoint Online. The Business Productivity Online Suite is enterprise software, hosted by Microsoft Online Services and sold through partners on a subscription basis. This offering makes it possible for a company such as RED to gain access to a wide range of enterprise-class capabilities—including desktop and mobile e-mail, calendaring and contacts, instant messaging, presence, audio/video conferencing, shared workspaces and Web-conferencing applications—without having to build or maintain an in-house application and server infrastructure. Microsoft hosts and maintains the servers with its own staff of application experts. It also stays on top of security patches and application updates so that RED always has access to the latest, most up-to-date versions of the applications to which it subscribes. Availability and uptime are backed by service level agreements (SLA) from Microsoft Online Services.

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Aaron Walters, CFO, Recycled Energy Development (RED)

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Aaron Walters, CFO, Recycled Energy Development (RED)

more attractive than the in-house solution because it had a lower cost of ownership, yet the same benefits and features,” says Walters.

The fact that RED could gain access to sophisticated document management applications that PointBridge had promoted—with essentially no upfront infrastructure costs and a monthly, pay-as-you-go, per-user subscription arrangement—made this solution feasible for RED. PointBridge promptly began development of the document management solution, and PointBridge facilitated the process of setting up RED’s accounts with Microsoft Online Services.

Benefits

For RED, there are numerous benefits to working with PointBridge, Microsoft, and the Business Productivity Online Suite from Microsoft Online Services. PointBridge has developed the document management solution that solves RED’s challenging document management issues. Microsoft Online Services provides an enterprise-class infrastructure through which RED can take advantage of the document management software without having to invest in the infrastructure and its ancillary support requirements. Finally, there are environmental benefits that, for RED, are important and that daily remind Walters and his team that this is definitely the right approach for RED to be taking.

An Enterprise-Grade Document Management Solution

“The document management solution we have built for RED enables them to store and retain contracts, maintain a version history, check in and check out documents—all the aspects of a document management solution you’d expect of an enterprise-class system,” says Todd Golden, Director of Alliances for PointBridge. “Multiple people can work on and edit contracts without stepping on each

others’ toes, and all the changes are tracked so they can be seen and identified easily.”

The document management solution that PointBridge has built for RED also culls certain metadata elements—reporting schedules, delivery milestones and the like—from the contracts themselves, and it reminds RED managers of those obligations in a management dashboard within the SharePoint Online environment.

“They don’t even have to go in and read the documents,” says Golden. “They can view the important information within the dashboard to know what important obligations are pending with their clients.”

“Microsoft Online Services and the PointBridge document management solution have helped RED’s business in a number of different ways,” says Walters. “They have enhanced collaboration within our different internal divisions and they have helped increase our productivity and helped manage the business process involving the industrial manufacturing companies that are our clients.”

Low-Cost Access

To have sized, acquired, and configured Office SharePoint Server to support the PointBridge document management solution could have taken several weeks and cost thousands of dollars. Ongoing staffing costs to support the server infrastructure would have added considerably to those costs. But RED was able to avoid significant time and expense by subscribing to SharePoint Online. The servers were available immediately, which meant that PointBridge could begin work on RED’s document management solution without delay.

“SharePoint Online was very attractive to RED and made the decision very easy,” says Walters. “It allows flexibility to grow with our

For More Information

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For more information about PointBridge products and services, call (312) 334-1900 or visit the Web site at: www.pointbridge.com

For more information about Recycled Energy Development (RED) products and services, call (630) 590-6030 or visit the Web site at: www.recycled-energy.com

organization. It's a per-user per month licensing so it offers a lower cost of ownership. It grows well with the business, and we're constantly getting updates from Microsoft, which keeps us up on the latest software versions. As a start-up company, cost containment is critical, and the Business Productivity Online Suite approach has played an important role in our cost containment efforts."

Reducing Greenhouse Gases

"Instead of us running an on-premises solution," says Walters, "which would require a certain amount of electricity to operate regardless of whether users were working on the servers themselves, we're able to take advantage of storage virtualization and server virtualization technologies that increase the throughput of the servers in the Microsoft data center and thereby reduce the actual amount of electricity used. As RED's business is all about profitably reducing greenhouse gas emissions, there is a lot of alignment between the online solution that Microsoft provides and RED's own philosophical model."

For Walters, such an alignment is not all that surprising, given the evolution of this powerful solution. "In talking through our business with PointBridge, early on it quickly became apparent that there was a very good fit with them and with the SharePoint Online solution. This is exactly the type of recommendations we look for from the trusted advisors—one that is going to help our business grow in ways that are consistent with our business needs and values."

Microsoft Online Services

Microsoft Online Services is a business-class communications and collaboration software offering delivered as a subscription service, hosted by Microsoft, and sold with partners. These services help make it easier for customers to rapidly and cost-effectively access the most up-to-date technologies, and are designed for rapid deployment to provide customers with streamlined communications, simplified management, and business-class reliability and security.

For IT staff, Microsoft Online Services helps reduce the burden of performing routine IT management tasks such as installation, provisioning, ongoing maintenance, patches, updates, and upgrades, making it possible for them to spend more time on initiatives that move the business forward. These services are backed by strong SLAs and are designed to meet the regulatory compliance and reliability needs of enterprise customers. On a technical level, the services boast the sophistication and reliability that customers expect from Microsoft, which continues to invest heavily in building data centers to support these services.

For more information, visit: www.microsoft.com/online

Software and Services

- Microsoft Online Services
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