

Bombela:

on track to effective content management

Keeping track of correspondence between its multiple partner companies is no longer a train wreck for this massive construction consortium.

THE SITUATION

Hundreds of kilometres of high-speed track, underground tunnels, late night blasting and the occasional sinkhole aren't nearly as intimidating as the coordination and management of the paperwork that the Gautrain project generates. Even though much of the communication between the six partners and numerous service providers is digital, it is a substantial task to file all communication in an easy-to-access facility. The task of keeping track, of what has been said and done fell to the Bombela Concession Company.

Bombela was formed to manage the Gautrain project, and needed to keep a numbered and referenced record of all the communication and documents produced and received by its employees. Until recently, one person fulfilled the role of document controller, and was charged with keeping a record of all the documents, which were saved on a file share. This was done in a single Excel spreadsheet, from which file numbers were manually allocated in sequence.

"Data was disparate and naming conventions were not consistent. It was difficult to find information, as there was no simple way to mine the data held in the file share during a search," says Sueleila Hendricks, business analyst for Bombela. "Documents could not be shared, limiting the team's effectiveness and ability to collaborate on multiple-user projects."

THE SOLUTION

Hendricks sought a solution that would provide a single repository for information that could be easily accessed by employees at

"SharePoint Server 2007 is an extremely powerful business tool, and it met all of Bombela's needs."

Michael Robinson, ECM software specialist, Intervate

Bombela, while working at their offices or off-site. "We needed a single, logical automated document numbering and naming convention to be applied to every document that goes through Bombela, and we needed a search facility that would make it easy to search for a particular document," she says. "We also required a check-out and check-in document sharing facility."

Michael Robinson, a developer at Enterprise Content Management specialists, Intervate, suggested Microsoft SharePoint Server 2007 as the solution. "SharePoint Server 2007 is an extremely powerful business tool, and it met all of Bombela's needs. It automatically caters for a central document repository, which is hosted on the company's intranet. The sophisticated search functionality allows for easy access to documents regardless of a worker's location, although the security protocols on the system are very tight, protecting the data from unauthorised users," he says.



"When a document is entered into Bombela's SharePoint Server 2007, the naming convention is based on the document's properties, including a brief content overview and a description of the document's function," says Robinson. "Once this detailed information is captured at a document's inception or arrival in the system, it is easy for employees to access from wherever they are working."

SharePoint Server 2007 keeps track of progressive versions of a document according to a predetermined naming convention, allowing users to share and edit a document without compromising its integrity.

"Bombela's business requirements were such that they required more detail in the naming conventions than what the standard SharePoint solution offers," says Robinson. "Intervate is skilled in building customised solutions in Microsoft Visual Studios .Net 2008, and the application we created allowed for the expanded naming detail that our client required."

Intervate also customised the front end of the server to reflect Bombela's identity. "This assisted users in adopting and embracing the new method of working, as it was clearly branded as their own project – just one of the ways in which Intervate helped us manage the change," says Hendricks. "They made the transition to

the new system easy, and were available to assist us even after the completion of the official rollout. I'm not a technical person, but Intervate created a solution that was easy to change over to, and which has been simple and effective to use."

SharePoint Server 2007 offers a wealth of functionality, not all of which is needed or used by Bombela at present. "However, as the organisation adapts, grows or changes, it can make use of the vast capabilities offered by this solution," says Robinson. Added functionality includes collaboration, portals, enterprise search, enterprise content management, business process and forms, and business intelligence.

With all the paperwork firmly in place – even if it isn't in paper format – the team at Bombela is perfectly on track to manage one of the biggest construction projects that South Africa has yet seen – thanks to Intervate and Microsoft.

TECHNOLOGY USED

Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007
Microsoft Visual Studios.Net

ABOUT INTERVATE

Intervate is a specialist provider of Enterprise Content Management solutions, focusing on knowledge management and productivity. Areas of expertise include workflow and process automation, intranets and portals, documents and records management, and document imaging and capture. Intervate has extensive experience in developing and deploying Microsoft SharePoint intranet and portal solutions, key components and versatile platforms for the delivery information and knowledge management systems.

As a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner with Information Worker

competency, Custom Development competency and Business Intelligence competency, Intervate holds expert Microsoft skills and provides a range of add-on products and solutions for the platform.

ABOUT BOMBELA

Bombela is the management company that facilitates interaction between the six companies that form the Bombela Concession that is responsible for the construction of the Gautrain rapid rail system. Bombela itself is a small company of only 40 employees, but it is the hub of all management and interaction between the various role-players in the Gautrain project.

Microsoft®

 **intervate**
anything's possible