



Advisicon Inc. Case Study Laika

Abstract:

LAIKA is an award-winning, world-class animation studio that has recently added feature-length films to its repertoire. To meet the demands of producing these complex projects, LAIKA partnered with Advisicon to deploy a customized Enterprise Project Management (EPM) system using Microsoft® Office Project® and Project Server 2007®. This resulted in an immediate improvement in overall project execution and project cost control.

Introduction

LAIKA produces entertainment and feature films as well as commercial videos. LAIKA acquired and built upon Vinton Studios' 30-year history of excellence and innovation as a leading producer of all types of animation, including computer generated, stop-motion and cel formats. In this process, LAIKA has attracted top management and production talent from across the animation film industry and boasts an Academy Award-winning director, 11 prime time Emmy Awards and over 100 international accolades. LAIKA's creative team, management and projects are helping it quickly grow into a creative powerhouse in the animated film genre.

As part of its ongoing development, LAIKA has branched into two organizations: LAIKA/House, which produces commercial videos and LAIKA/Entertainment, which produces both entertainment and feature films. LAIKA/Entertainment's feature film projects have been an exciting new direction for LAIKA.

Business Situation

In addition to drawing top talent, LAIKA has also focused attention on developing its project management capacity to successfully plan, track and manage feature-length film projects. Due to the complexity of the longer films, LAIKA was looking for ways to consistently overcome the management challenges that come with producing these projects.

LAIKA identified three critical areas that needed to be addressed to support its ongoing organizational development:

Project Planning

- LAIKA had very limited forecasting or visibility of resource demand and impact with no ability to assess productivity of creative resources
- Although deliverables were detailed, interdependencies were not clearly mapped and linked (no enterprise-level view of project impacts)
- Very little integrated project planning activity. This was a corporate problem that touched on nearly every area from project budget planning /management to tracking and visibility of project performance to decision-making based on performance data

Project Execution





- Inefficient use of resources due to a lack of control management or monitoring
- Reactionary management
- Unanticipated schedule delays

Project Reporting

- No timely or systematic way of reviewing the business
- Lack of analytical tools to evaluate planned versus actual resources and no consolidated views of schedules, resource tasks or availability
- Lack of data integrity – data not captured accurately or data captured in multiple, distributed tools

Solution Delivered

LAIKA partnered with Advisicon, a Microsoft Gold Certified EPM Partner, to deploy an integrated Enterprise Project Management (EPM) solution to support LAIKA's growing project management needs. This innovative and customized EPM system was built on the Microsoft Office Project and Project Server 2007 platform. Immediate results were noted in all project aspects. The EPM system provided a strong platform to support LAIKA's project planning, scheduling and management methodology.

The Advisicon-delivered EPM solution provided the necessary functionality, power, ease-of-use and scalability required by LAIKA's complex project management challenges. The system automated and centralized many functions including project communications, tracking and reporting to reduce redundancy and streamline workflow.

Other key elements of the solution included:

- Migrating projects from applications to Microsoft Office Project 2007 and publishing them to Microsoft Office Project Server 2007
- Development of project templates, custom fields and other business specific reporting tools
- Development of an enterprise-wide shared resource pool to reflect LAIKA's organizational and management structure and workflows
- User training to ensure adoption and effective use of all platforms using Advisicon-developed curriculum

Another critical element of the solution's success was the ability to develop and deliver a pilot project using Microsoft Office Project Server 2007. The pilot was used to identify and correct any issues or gaps in LAIKA's project management processes and to detect possible integration opportunities with other systems and processes.

Benefits

Once the new EPM system was installed and running, LAIKA began to see benefits nearly immediately. The most immediate improvements to the company included:

Project Planning

- Systemized approach for planning realistic production schedules
- Customized project templates and standardized terminology to facilitate more consistent planning, communications and reporting across the enterprise





- Enterprise-level views of project and inter-project impacts providing management visibility to assess and predict productivity of creative resources based on actual data including integrated project budget, resource and schedule planning

Project Execution

- The ability to monitor and control resource allocation and management
- Visibility of schedule changes allowing management to anticipate and mitigate schedule delays and other risks
- Systematic evaluation for effective management decision-making
- Integrated project workspaces for proactive risk assessment, planning and management

Project Reporting

- Web-enabled views and portfolio reporting on projects, tasks, issues and risks with drill-down capabilities
- Capacity to analyze and report on planned versus actual estimates
- Ensured data integrity through a single integrated database

Notable long-term benefits of the implementation include:

- Effective management and control of scope, budget, issues and risks, resources and schedule changes
- Reinforcement of LAIKA's organizational structure and business rules
- Collaboration and better communication across the organization
- Integration and scalability with other SQL-based business systems

LAIKA and Advisicon supported this EPM implementation with training for administrators, users and managers. By ensuring the adoption of the technology, LAIKA has seen sustained use and benefits from the Microsoft project management tools. It also enabled them to continue developing their customized methodology, standards and processes. Given the success of the implementation, LAIKA will be able to build on their infrastructure and extend the benefits of their EPM system to other groups.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Office Project Server 2007: implementation, consulting and training
- Microsoft Office Project Professional 2007: consulting and training
- Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services 3.0: consulting
- Microsoft Office Excel

Key Users

- Project managers
- Project team members
- Resource managers
- Production managers
- Executives

