



Overview

Country or Region: United States
Industry: Utilities

Customer Profile

FluidIQs Inc., headquartered in Napa, California, is an established leader in the water and wastewater industry in the western United States.

Business Situation

To further streamline their operations, FluidIQs asked Sequence Advisors to design a standard, centralized scheduling process to improve on-time delivery.

Solution

Sequence Advisors designed and documented a new scheduling process using the Microsoft® Enterprise Project Management Solution, part of the Microsoft Office system.

Benefits

- Centralized, standardized tracking
- Increased utilization
- Increased completion rate
- Better project visibility
- Better ability to handle growth

Water Management Firm Uses EPM to Boost Utilization and Improve On-Time Performance

"The software shines a light on where we have problems, so we know where to focus our efforts."

Jim McMillin, Director of Delivery, FluidIQs

FluidIQs, a wastewater management company, wanted to improve the scheduling and delivery of its projects in order to increase competitiveness and boost revenues. To do so, it needed to replace its decentralized scheduling processes with a centralized process. The company hired technology consultants Sequence Advisors to design and document that process using the Microsoft® Enterprise Project Management Solution, part of the Microsoft Office system. With the new centralized, standardized scheduling tool, the company estimates it will increase staff utilization as well as the percentage of on-time delivery. In addition, Sequence Advisors predicts that FluidIQs will be able to better set revenue recognition milestones, in addition to being more prepared to handle future growth at the company.

“One way to gauge our progress with the software is that we are now having fights earlier in the planning process about resource conflicts. This is good, because then the customers don’t see the problems and we can deal with them in-house.”

Jim McMillin, Director of Delivery, FluidIQs

Situation

FluidIQs is a preeminent organization in the water and wastewater market in the eleven western U.S. states. An industry leader, FluidIQs provides the resources and expertise necessary for today’s groundbreaking industrial control applications.

Known as CMC for the past 25 years, the company formalized its evolution with the introduction of the name FluidIQs, a more appropriate communication of what the company is focused on in 2005 and beyond—specifically, its breadth of capability in water and wastewater collection, distribution, and treatment.

In the past, FluidIQs operated with a decentralized scheduling system that kept the company from operating at peak efficiency. Jim McMillin, Director of Delivery, FluidIQs, describes the previous system, and its results, as “chaos. We didn’t have an enterprisewide planning process. Our project managers had their own ideas of what to do, with little awareness of competing needs, which led to a lot of schedule delays.”

Without a centralized and standardized way to schedule and track projects, management struggled to identify projects that were in danger of missing their milestones and delivery dates, and to address those potential problems before they became actual ones. Moreover, managers lacked the overarching view of their many projects and resources that would enable them to reassign resources dynamically to accommodate the changing status and needs of those projects. In the increasingly competitive environment in which FluidIQs operates, these challenges became significant.

“We have at least 100 active projects going at the same time, most of them of long duration—1 to 1½ years on average,” says McMillin. “We needed to have the ability to

look at our resource needs across time and across the organization.” McMillin’s goal? “To streamline resource loading and forecasting, as well as being able to drive accountability across schedules and across the team.”

Solution

FluidIQs decided to hire Sequence Advisors, a software solution provider based in Berkeley, California, to create a solution based on the Microsoft® Enterprise Project Management Solution, part of the Microsoft Office system.

The solution uses Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Professional 2003, Office Project Web Access, and Office Project Server 2003 to centralize and track project data. It also uses Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000 and SQL Server Reporting Services for authoring and distribution of project governance-focused reports.

“We started with several pilot applications, and Sequence Advisors did extensive training,” McMillin says. “They performed reviews of our plans and did monitoring of critical elements, showing us how to use the tools effectively to make our schedules adequate to check. They also added a certain comfort level, and helped us with training across the company. They now develop custom reports, and they continue to monitor accuracy in our schedules.”

Benefits

The Sequence Advisors solution has given FluidIQs a way of scheduling and tracking its projects that has enabled the company to see an 8 percent increase in utilization and an 80 percent on-time performance rate. In addition, the solution has provided FluidIQs with better visibility into revenue recognition, a standardized way of managing projects, and a streamlined method of using and forecasting resources.

Centralized, Standardized Tracking

The new solution deployed at FluidIQs uses flexible Microsoft Office applications to provide the company with a centralized and standardized method of scheduling and tracking projects.

Increased Utilization

The solution at FluidIQs has directly contributed to increased utilization at the company, according to McMillin. "We have seen an 8 percent increase in utilization, and a 20 percent improvement in adherence to schedule," he says. "Enterprise Project Management is now the only way work gets done when there is a project. We are getting to the point where we can trust the data. The software shines a light on where we have problems, so we know where to focus our efforts."

Increased Completion Rate

Because the EPM solution has increased the speed and efficiency with which FluidIQs managers can handle projects, it has led to an 80 percent on-time completion rate against an interim baseline, according to McMillin. Primary issues affecting that number are resource availability and budgeted hour accuracy.

Better Project Visibility

The Microsoft EPM solution also supplies FluidIQs with better visibility into critical milestones for revenue recognition. "One way to gauge our progress with the software is that we are now having fights earlier in the planning process about resource conflicts," says McMillin. "This is good, because then the customers don't see the problems and we can deal with them in-house. We now have visibility that we never had before; we can see and know what people are working on today, and what they'll be working on next week. We also have finer detail in budgeting and tracking shipping, and we can now find problems we wouldn't have caught until the project closed. We can refocus and redirect

when things aren't going right, which results in refining the process."

"When we first began to implement Enterprise Project Management," McMillin continues, "we took an experimental point of view. We were only lukewarm about the process, so it took almost a year to implement at our own pace. Now, I believe that a company needs to step into the deep end. Why have only partial visibility? People didn't think Enterprise Project Management would work. Now they see it is working. This is not universally popular, because now the staff is accountable, but that was the whole idea and is an improvement."

Better Ability to Handle Growth

The long-term growth projected by FluidIQs makes it imperative to recruit new employees over the next few years. "Now we have the ability to deal with staffing changes," says McMillin.

"FluidIQs is well-positioned to meet future industry challenges, from issues such as the further heightening of water quality regulations and homeland security, to the aging infrastructure of our industry and focus on automation, to global resource management, to the ever-changing role that technology plays in the industry and the resulting standardization that can be achieved."

For More Information

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For more information about FluidIQs products and services, call (707) 258-8400 or visit the website at: www.fluidiqs.com

For more information about Sequence Advisors products and services, call (510) 540-7875 or visit the website at: www.sequenceadvisors.com

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