



## Overview

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** Manufacturing—  
Construction

## Customer Profile

Founded in 1923 and based in Richmond, Virginia, Luck Stone supplies stone aggregate and related products for commercial, residential, and civil properties. The company also provides tennis-court surfacing products and develops industrial real estate.

## Business Situation

Luck Stone struggled to manage content and maintain a sense of employee community.

## Solution

Luck Stone deployed an intranet based on Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010, including collaboration and content-management capabilities.

## Benefits

- Content search dramatically faster
- More effective cross-business collaboration
- IT savings of U.S.\$160,000 yearly
- IT support-ticket activity down

## Aggregate Supplier Enhances Internal Community, Cuts Costs \$160,000 Yearly

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Trevor Blanning, Network Manager, Luck Stone

Since its founding more than 85 years ago, Richmond, Virginia-based Luck Stone has achieved and maintained success not only by providing reliable aggregate products and services, but also by promoting a strong sense of community within the company. To build and maintain that sense of community among 800 employees in four business units and 39 locations, the company deployed an intranet—twice—but to no avail because of content-management problems. Then, working with Microsoft National Systems Integrator Partner Ironworks, Luck Stone learned about Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 and decided to deploy a new intranet based on that platform. Now, employees access documents in seconds instead of minutes and collaborate more effectively, and the company is saving up to U.S.\$160,000 yearly in IT costs and enhancing the culture of community that is central to the Luck Stone tradition.



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Luck Stone

## Situation

Luck Stone, a Richmond, Virginia-based supplier of crushed stone, sand, gravel, and related products, has enjoyed consistent growth while remaining family-owned and family-operated since its founding back in 1923. Today, with four business units and 39 separate locations in Virginia and North Carolina, Luck Stone is one of the largest stone-aggregate suppliers in the eastern United States. The company also provides specialty stone products at the retail level for residential and commercial properties, manufactures and markets a top-selling surfacing material for clay tennis courts, and develops unique industrial business parks that integrate natural, historical, and environmental elements into their design.

Because of the distinct environments in which the various Luck Stone business units operate, Luck Stone managers work hard to maintain a sense of community among the company's 800 employees, known as associates. As part of this effort, the company deployed an intranet in the late 1990s to foster communication and collaboration and simplify the access and management of more than 6 terabytes of unclassified content that had resided in public folders. Unfortunately, however, neither that intranet, based on IntraNetics, nor one that followed five years later, based on Oracle UCM, was successful, because of problems surrounding content management.

Specifically, Luck Stone associates found it difficult to post or update content to those intranets, and even more difficult to find content that was already there, so they depended on the people in IT to do it for them. “At some point, users grew tired of asking for us to update content,

and we grew tired of doing it, so the company abandoned its intranet effort,” says Trevor Blanning, Network Manager at Luck Stone. “This meant returning to email and even surface mail, for the 15 percent of our associates without their own PCs, for everything from floating new-product ideas and disseminating newsletters and announcements to seeking feedback on new company policies. This also meant returning to the public-folder model for managing content.”

The situation was far from ideal, but without a usable intranet, Luck Stone made do. Or it did until late 2008, when the economic downturn drove a wave of anxiety through the company. “The company president asked those of us in IT for help in giving associates a forum for airing their concerns, to help maintain morale then and in the coming years,” Blanning explains. “He wanted us to build another intranet, and this time it had to work.”

## Solution

Because Luck Stone has long used Microsoft products, Blanning and his colleagues decided to evaluate Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007, the then-current version of the Microsoft SharePoint technology, as a platform for the new intranet. For help with the evaluation they engaged the services of Ironworks, a Microsoft National Systems Integrator Partner also headquartered in Richmond, based on that company's SharePoint expertise and excellent reputation among local-area businesses.

## A Thorough Evaluation

With the company's less-than-favorable intranet experiences of the past, Blanning was determined to conduct a thorough evaluation before making a decision. So,

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over the following four months, he and his colleagues interviewed individuals at several dozen area companies that had implemented intranets based on SharePoint technology. From this research, Blanning learned that SharePoint technology enjoyed a high adoption and satisfaction rate among the individuals interviewed. From consultations with experts at Ironworks, he also learned that the upcoming version of the technology—Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010—featured social-networking capabilities that seemed ideal for helping Luck Stone maintain a sense of community.

“At the time, the release of Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 was still a year out,” Blanning explains. “But we decided it was worth the wait, not only for the social-networking capabilities but also because, as a company, we were starting to plan an eventual migration from Oracle Financials to another Microsoft product targeted for a future release: Microsoft Dynamics ERP 2011. We recognized then that we could also use our intranet as a consolidated platform for line-of-business solutions, and for that we wanted support for seamless, out-of-the-box integration between the intranet and our ERP [enterprise resource planning] solution—the kind of integration you enjoy only with products from a single vendor.”

#### **Stringent Requirements**

Before launching the intranet project, however, Blanning and his colleagues had to address two critical concerns, the first of them surrounding security. “We wanted to make the intranet accessible over the Internet for associates who were traveling, for example, and wanted a full-size display experience without having to carry their laptop, or for associates who

wanted access from their home PCs,” he explains. “We learned we could do this while maintaining the security we needed with the help of Microsoft Forefront Endpoint Protection 2010.”

The second concern was to ensure a unified, consistent experience for everyone at Luck Stone while simultaneously addressing the distinct needs of each business unit and the diverse ways that associates would access the intranet. “One in seven Luck Stone associates works at a construction or manufacturing site and relies on a shared, kiosk-based PC,” Blanning points out. “So, to ensure that we could build an effective intranet experience for these associates, we built multiple on-site visits, extensive interviews, and site-specific training into our timeline for development and deployment.”

Blanning’s team engaged people at all levels of the company in the process, primarily to spread the word that a new and far-improved intranet was on its way. “From day one, we were talking about user adoption,” Blanning says. “We got the right people engaged at the right time, including senior people from each business unit and office, and conducted three ‘train the trainer’ sessions for super users.”

Development started in August 2009, with a team of eight professionals from Ironworks and eight from Luck Stone, and in April 2010, team members had a solution that was ready to receive content, within hours of the release to manufacturing of SharePoint Server 2010. Two months later, they completed migration of that content and the intranet went live, one week after SharePoint Server 2010 was introduced into general availability.

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Trevor Blanning, Network Manager,  
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The infrastructure that supports the current Luck Stone intranet consists of three servers running Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010, two front-end web servers running Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 for Internet Sites Enterprise, and two clustered database servers in a storage area network (SAN) running Microsoft SQL Server 2008 R2 Enterprise data management software. The intranet and database servers also run the Windows Server 2008 R2 Enterprise operating system.

#### **Extensive Capabilities**

According to Blanning, the current Luck Stone intranet presents a unified and consistent community message, provides branding and content that targets associates in the different business units, and supports transparent access to email through Microsoft Outlook Web App for associates who access the intranet through shared PCs. The intranet also provides the following:

- Blogs, discussion boards, wikis, and team sites
- An audience-targeted user experience that renders a different page design based on a user's profile properties
- A suite of connected web parts that deliver weather, traffic, safety-incident data, and driving directions specific to each of the company's locations
- A custom newsletter utility that stores all newsletter content, including attachments, in SharePoint lists and provides an administrative interface supporting different levels of access for authors and editors
- A way for business users to compile key quarterly financial data by using Excel Services in Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010

In its next release, the Luck Stone intranet will include key performance indicators and dashboard components that use Microsoft SQL Server PowerPivot for Microsoft SharePoint and PerformancePoint Services in Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010. That release, slated for completion in 2012, is part of the project in which the company will move from Oracle Financials to Microsoft Dynamics ERP 2011.

#### **Benefits**

In contrast to earlier intranet deployments, the current intranet has received a warm welcome from Luck Stone associates, who are using it to work more efficiently and collaborate more effectively. The intranet also helps the company to reduce IT costs, by as much as U.S.\$160,000 per year. Perhaps most important, the intranet supports management in its objective of maintaining the strong sense of community that has remained a high priority at Luck Stone for nearly nine decades.

#### **Effective Collaboration**

With the intranet, Luck Stone associates finally have a convenient way to access content ranging from construction-site maps to scheduled events, updated benefits information to the company directory, and more. Through a comprehensive enterprise search solution provided out-of-the-box with SharePoint Server 2010, associates can easily find content that eluded them when it resided in public folders and on shared drives; as a result, the average search time has dropped from seven minutes to only 10 seconds. “Associates can leverage the intelligence in existing content far more readily, whatever the task,” Blanning says. “Associates also are less likely to waste their time and that of

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their colleagues with email requests for hard-to-find information."

Similarly, Luck Stone associates can more easily discover resources and expertise across the company, sharing ideas across the different business units and identifying areas for mutual business improvement. "For example, most of our construction sites use a common set of highly specialized equipment, and now associates can share timely information on maintenance and troubleshooting," Blanning says. "This saves effort for the associates involved and potentially helps us to extend the working life of these valuable assets and maximize the return on our investment."

Another example of cross-business-unit collaboration occurs when a new project in one business unit requires products from another. "Associates from different business units can collaborate far more easily with the shared, multiple-way communication of an intranet than they ever could with email," Blanning says. "Cross-business-unit projects are among our largest and most profitable, so the effective cross-business-unit collaboration we are achieving with our intranet gives us a powerful advantage."

#### **Resource Efficiencies**

Just as Luck Stone is raising business productivity and enhancing cohesion with the intranet, it also is spending its IT infrastructure dollars more efficiently. By moving content management away from public folders built on a fixed infrastructure into a virtualized environment with SAN storage, Blanning and his colleagues anticipate a more flexible approach to storage that will result in infrastructure savings of up to \$85,000 per year. And with the next release of its intranet, alongside the

replacement of Oracle Financials with Microsoft Dynamics CRM, Luck Stone will enjoy a net savings in CRM licensing costs of as much as \$75,000 a year.

Besides reducing IT costs, Luck Stone is boosting the productivity of its IT professionals. "Since the launch of this intranet, IT professionals who previously acted as the gatekeepers for provisioning public folders and managing access rights have seen a decrease in support-ticket activity by as much as 35 percent," Blanning reports. "This enables us to spend our time and talents on more value-added pursuits, such as customer-engagement technologies and strategic-infrastructure projects."

#### **Support for Company Values**

Perhaps most important, intranet users at Luck Stone are taking advantage of the solution to strengthen personal connections. One user in particular is Charles S. Luck III, formerly President and now Chairman of the Board.

According to Blanning, during his 30-year tenure as company president, Mr. Luck would visit with associates at all Luck Stone sites on a regular and frequent basis, a tradition he continues to this day—but with a far more efficient and effective method of preparation.

"In the past, Mr. Luck spent considerable time researching who was working at a given site at a given time, but even then he had no easy way of ensuring the information was complete and accurate," Blanning says. "Now, before he starts out, he simply logs on to the intranet from his home PC and has immediate access to timely information, including photographs, for all associates who work at the site he will visit. He prints the information and studies it in transit, so

## For More Information

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For more information about Ironworks products and services, call (804) 967-9200 or visit the website at:  
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[www.luckstone.com](http://www.luckstone.com)

that once he arrives he can enjoy productive conversations with everyone there, even associates who first joined the company long after he retired. This is emblematic of the way Mr. Luck feels about the company, its associates, and the values that have made Luck Stone an enduring success.”

**Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010**  
Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 is the business collaboration platform for the enterprise and the Web.

For more information about Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010, go to:  
[www.microsoft.com/sharepoint](http://www.microsoft.com/sharepoint)

### Software and Services

- Microsoft SharePoint
  - Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010
  - Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 for Internet Sites Enterprise
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
  - Windows Server 2008 R2 Enterprise
  - Microsoft SQL Server 2008 R2 Enterprise

### Technologies

- Microsoft Forefront Endpoint Protection 2010
- Hyper-V

### Partner

- Ironworks