

Pella Corporation Uses Office XP to Make Strong Tradition of Teamwork Even Stronger

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By taking advantage of the enhanced collaboration capabilities of the Microsoft Office XP Professional desktop-productivity suite, this major manufacturer of windows and doors is helping employees to work together and with partners, suppliers, and customers to help maintain and expand a long tradition of success in its industry.

Situation

Based in a historic community about an hour from Des Moines, Iowa, Pella Corporation is a window and door manufacturer that employs some 6,800 people and is known for its innovation. Perhaps its most famous product is the original “disappearing” Roloscreen®, just one of the 60 U.S. product and design patents held by the company. In its facilities stretching from Oregon to Pennsylvania, the family-owned company promotes a powerful people-oriented culture that has spanned its nearly eight decades in business. Pella has appeared in *Fortune’s* “100 Best Companies to Work For” for three years in a row. It has maintained profitability, without encountering a layoff. It continues what is now 50 years of profit sharing among its employees. And it has done all this even as retailing trends have shifted dramatically.

Pella executives recognize that doing all this takes a special commitment to what the company calls “high-performance teamwork” among employees, partners, and customers. For this reason Pella relies heavily on tools and technology that support collaboration. One recent example is the company’s deployment of the Microsoft® Office XP Professional desktop-productivity suite.

Solution

The deployment of Office XP on the 2,200 desktop and laptop machines at Pella is an integral part of a larger project that will bring the Microsoft Windows® XP Professional operating system to those client systems and the Windows 2000 Server operating system (with Active Directory® service) and Microsoft Systems Management Server version 2.0 to a dozen of the company’s servers. With this deployment, information technology (IT) executives are looking forward to helping users experience the productivity advantages of working with Office XP in a reliable environment, one in which comprehensive application and system support is just a mouse click away.



Solution Overview

Customer Profile

Privately held window and door manufacturer founded in 1925, based in Iowa, with roughly 6,800 employees. Most widely known for its “disappearing” Roloscreen® as well as some 60 U.S. product and design patents.

Business Situation

Needed a way to further strengthen collaboration capabilities among employees, partners, and suppliers that regularly exchange documents.

Solution

Benefits

Projected productivity increases based on enhanced collaboration, communication, and system and document restore capabilities of Microsoft® Office XP and remote-assistance capabilities of Microsoft Windows® XP.

Software and Services

Microsoft Office XP Professional
Microsoft Systems Management Server 2.0
Microsoft Windows XP Professional
Microsoft Windows 2000 Server with Active Directory®
Microsoft Consulting Services

Hardware

1,900 desktops, 300 laptops; mostly Hewlett-Packard VL Series and E-Vectra Series on the desktop, IBM ThinkPad on the laptop.

Scenario

Manufacturing: business to business and business to consumer

Benefits

At the Top: Collaboration and Group Scheduling

For Senior Business Systems Manager Jim Thomas, the enhanced collaboration capabilities of Microsoft Office XP Professional are key:

- **Send for Review**, which enables employees to assign “roles” to everyone involved in a document-review cycle and provide the appropriate tools to each individual
- **Compare and Merge**, which simplifies the merging of edits and comments from multiple reviewers into a single document
- **Markups**, which provides an easy-to-read format for displaying edits and comments
- **Reviewing toolbar**, which provides users a highly customizable approach to reviewing team feedback

“When we evaluated this product, we were amazed at how sophisticated it was in terms of recording, tracking, and displaying updates and facilitating their incorporation into a [Microsoft] Word, Excel, or PowerPoint® document,” Thomas says. “All these features will be extremely handy for the production of agreements, warranties, and customer contracts—and especially beneficial for suppliers and partners that are using the same tools.”

Even early in the deployment, the deployment team itself was making extensive use of these collaboration capabilities in producing training documentation. As Communications Engineer Kenny Nedder explains, “Three people create handouts to help prepare users for the new Office XP environment, and they’re coming up with good ideas all the time. In the past, they were delayed and distracted by the need to draft, circulate, redraft, recirculate, and so on, but now they have an easy way to put those ideas together.”

Another collaborative capability that has impressed Nedder is the enhanced group scheduling available through the Outlook® Group Schedules feature. In the past, meetings would take place without all the necessary participants, or individuals would have to reorder their own schedules to accommodate a proposed meeting time. Now, Nedder and his colleagues can save group calendars, view free/busy information over the Internet, and arrange meetings for a group of virtually any size and including participants from inside and outside the company.

Making Tools More Accessible, Reducing Downtime

Yet another Office XP technology promoting collaboration among Pella employees, partners, and suppliers is Smart Tags. Smart Tags is a new feature that links content in Office-based documents on client systems with related content on other client systems, on servers, and on Web sites. Generally regarded as more of a productivity enhancer, Smart Tags can play a significant role in strengthening teamwork, especially for people who may be new to some of the Office XP productivity tools.

“One of the best ways for an individual to feel part of a team is to be able to make a contribution early in a project, whatever his or her comfort level with the tools used to document that project,” Thomas says. “For example, some people are very comfortable with Word but may have used Excel only a handful of times, so when they need to create a spreadsheet they might use Word tables or take up a fellow-employee’s time for an Excel ‘tutorial.’ With Smart Tags, a user can produce a professional document leveraging the entire suite of tools without having to be expert

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Kenny Nedder
Communications Engineer
Pella Corporation

in them all. This is particularly important at Pella, where effective written communications are valued highly as a tool for promoting an effective collaborative approach to the business.”

As important as the collaborative functionality of Office XP is to Thomas, Nedder, and their IT colleagues at Pella, there are other product features they also consider essential. High on their list are enhanced recovery capabilities including Document Recovery, AutoRecover, Repair and Extract, and Safe Mode. “Even though it’s a rare event for people to lose data from system problems, it does happen,” Thomas explains. “But with the enhanced recovery capabilities of Office XP, recovering a lost document or data will mean only a few minutes of downtime as opposed to an hour, which used to be the case.”

Productivity Advantages of Windows XP

Windows XP provides a reliable environment for Office XP, one in which comprehensive application and system support is just a mouse click away. With the Remote Assistance capability of Windows XP, for example, a user can grant remote control of his or her desktop to a peer or IT professional. “This means the user doesn’t need to wait for anyone to personally visit his or her desk,” Thomas points out. “This is a big timesaver, since some Pella facilities do not have an IT support person on site.”

Another productivity advantage for Pella employees will come through the rich driver database available through Windows XP. This means employees who want to attach certain peripherals—like digital cameras, for downloading images into Office XP applications—can do so without the downtime usually required for installing drivers. As Nedder says, “This is great for users of newer peripheral devices because they won’t have to load any special software to enjoy the additional capability.” In this scenario, a marketing team could easily shoot and post photos of new homes as Pella windows were being installed or a manager could photograph an example of best practices for use in training presentations. Then they could upload the photos to any PC and incorporate them into a multimedia presentation along with text from Word files, tables from Excel, and other graphics from PowerPoint.

According to Thomas, these scenarios illustrate just a few of the collaborative advantages available to Pella staff, partners, and suppliers with the deployment in that company of Office XP Professional and Windows XP Professional. “Add to that the reliability benefits of the document-recovery tools in Office XP and the larger reliability and support advantages of Windows XP,” he says, “and Pella is well-positioned to expand and enhance its tradition of teamwork for competitive advantage and continuing success.”

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