



Telecommunications Leader Focuses Internal Communications with Powerful Intranet

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: High tech and electronics

Customer Profile

Tellabs provides innovative telecommunications solutions and services to companies worldwide. It employs 3,150 people and in 2008 earned revenues of U.S.\$1.7 billion.

Business Situation

Because of technology limitations, a corporate intranet that Tellabs deployed in 1998 was incapable of providing employees with the timely, comprehensive, and targeted information they needed.

Solution

The company rebuilt its intranet on a foundation of Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007.

Benefits

- Centralized communications
- Brand and vision reinforcement
- Yearly IT savings of \$50,000
- Foundation for new applications

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Heather Thoms, Corporate Communications Specialist, Tellabs

For more than 30 years, Illinois-based Tellabs has been a major player in the world of telecommunications, with products currently installed at 41 of the top 50 global telecom service providers. Because Tellabs is similarly dedicated to helping its own employees communicate and collaborate effectively, the company recently rebuilt its intranet using Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007. Now, Tellabs is providing employees with a single, central place to get information, with content targeted to readers based on geographical, functional, and departmental criteria. As a result, the company is reducing wasteful and redundant e-mail messages and phone calls, while providing more timely information to everyone and reinforcing its brand, vision, and strategy. It also is saving U.S.\$50,000 annually in IT costs and positioning itself for the development of future strategic applications.

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Huzefa Mustaly, IT Unified Communications Manager, Tellabs

Situation

Tellabs provides mobile, optical, and business solutions to telecom service providers, independent operating companies, multiple-system operators, cable television companies, and government agencies. From its company headquarters in Naperville, Illinois, and 40 branch offices, the company has deployed solutions in more than 500 networks, and today more than half of the world’s mobile phone calls are made on networks owned by Tellabs customers.

To maintain the company’s leadership in this intensely competitive industry, the 3,150 employees of Tellabs need easy access to company and industry news, policies, announcements, events, and other key information. To meet this need, Tellabs deployed a corporate intranet in 1998. Due to limitations of the technology platform, however, the intranet wasn’t doing the job it was intended to do.

Huzefa Mustaly, IT Unified Communications Manager at Tellabs, explains: “Officially, we had a single, corporatwide intranet site, but, in fact, it was mostly a home page with links to sites that were developed and maintained by various departments and branch offices. Overall, the site’s structure was disjointed, its search capability was limited, and its content was not easily targeted to employees at a given location, region, department, or job function, much less on an individual basis.”

As a result, the Tellabs intranet often generated as much inefficiency as it was designed to eliminate. “An employee might need to know more about a new project but be unable to easily find the information on the intranet, so he or she would turn to another employee for answers,” says Heather Thoms, Corporate Communications Specialist, Tellabs. “This wasted the

time and interrupted the work of at least two people.”

Unsurprisingly, the intranet failed to keep employees as well-informed as it should have. Thoms adds, “In one employee survey, 87 percent reported reading the daily news posted on the intranet, but just 45 percent said it kept them up-to-date on internal news, and only 35 percent said it kept them current on industry news.”

One reason for this was the difficulty of keeping the content fresh. Content owners usually needed help from the Web development team to make changes, an approach that was costly and time-consuming. “We had to schedule resources in advance and then take two or three people away from their other work for about an hour,” Thoms says. “As a result, updates were sometimes delayed, or last-minute announcements had to be made through e-mail, which defeated the purpose of even having a company intranet.”

The lack of effective targeting capability posed another problem, particularly for Tellabs employees outside the United States. “At our Finland office, which is one of our engineering hubs, employees wanted more content targeted to them, but this meant they would have to commit more resources to working on their own separate site or to coordinating the targeting efforts with headquarters,” Thoms says. “This, too, wasted resources and delayed delivery of what should have been timely information.”

Solution

Mustaly, Thoms, and their colleagues at Tellabs decided to replace the existing corporate intranet with one based on a different technology. They chose a technology already in use elsewhere at the company: Microsoft® Office SharePoint®

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Server 2007. “Some departments had implemented Office SharePoint Server 2007 for project collaboration, and, at the time, we were leading information sessions to introduce new features,” Mustaly says. “So, we started with a solid internal knowledge base of how the product could be applied to our intranet.”

Mustaly and his colleagues were confident that Office SharePoint Server 2007 could provide a smooth path to implementation. “We had found Office SharePoint Server 2007 easy to administer, easy to adopt with minimal training, and easy to implement without requiring additional development,” he says. “Further, with Office SharePoint Server 2007, we wouldn’t have to acquire additional licenses or hardware. So using the product for the intranet represented a win-win at Tellabs: an easily administered site for corporate communications, and a major project that could help give wings to our then-current SharePoint initiatives.”

To provide leadership for the development effort, Tellabs enlisted Blue Egg Communications, a Web solution provider based in nearby Elgin, Illinois. Over the better part of 2008, a three-person team using the Microsoft .NET Framework 3.5, Microsoft Office SharePoint Designer 2007, and the Microsoft Visual Studio® 2005 Professional development system built an entirely new intranet that could incorporate content from across the company into a coherent and consistent whole. The team also used Active Directory® Domain Services and Office SharePoint Server 2007 user profiles to build powerful targeting capabilities into the solution so that corporate communications staffers could easily customize content according to region, department, project team, job function, and more.

To familiarize employees with the new intranet, the development team conducted

formal demonstrations for two separate audiences. For executives, they provided a live preview two weeks before launch. For other employees, they provided live and video tutorials one week before launch.

According to Thoms, this preparation paid off handsomely with an “overwhelming” response from employees to the new intranet. “After previewing the new intranet, our chief financial officer said he wanted the corporate finance site content to be incorporated into it right away,” she reports. “The people from our Asia Pacific and Finland regional offices said much the same thing.”

At rollout, the Tellabs intranet featured a regularly updated blog from the company’s chief executive officer, internal and external news, information on employee benefits and company policies, a calendar of events, a stock feed, a “question of the week,” a time-zone converter, a currency converter, and messaging that reinforces the company’s vision and strategy. The intranet also provides vastly improved search capabilities based on the Enterprise Search feature of Office SharePoint Server 2007.

Today, the most commonly used search feature is SharePoint Best Bets, which directs employees to the most relevant information and enables them to access both internal and external Web sites through the internal Search box. In the future, the Tellabs intranet will support social networking by integrating SharePoint My Sites with the Tellabs corporate directory.

Benefits

With its new intranet based on Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007, Tellabs is giving employees worldwide a central source of consistent and relevant information, reinforcing the company’s brand

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and vision. Because the new intranet is so comprehensive, Tellabs branch and hub offices can retire their own separate sites, for significant savings in IT cost and effort. Moreover, with Office SharePoint Server 2007, the company has a solid foundation for developing strategic applications that can support future growth.

Single, Central Point of Communication

Perhaps the most important difference between the prior intranet at Tellabs and the current one is its completeness. "We believe the intranet should be the first place that all Tellabs employees go for timely and relevant information," Thoms says. "This intranet helps us achieve that goal. It is consistent, coherent, and comprehensive, with content that is easily targeted to different audiences and features that can be easily added."

In just one example, Thoms built a new section for Tellabs' global marketing team dramatically faster than before. "With the prior intranet, a new section would have required a meeting with members of the Web development team, several iterations, and at least two weeks to complete," she says. "With this intranet, I created the new section on my own in a single day—saving their time and mine."

Powerful Way to Reinforce the Brand

As Thoms further explains, effective targeting is more than just ensuring that audiences are receiving content they want—it also is ensuring that they are spared from receiving content they do not want. "Without targeting, the intranet could easily deliver so much information to so many people that they might come to see it as another form of spam," she says. "With targeting, people see only what is relevant to them."

Now, all Tellabs employees go to one central place for information regardless of their region or department. "There's no longer a corporate site, an Asia Pacific site, a finance site, and so on," Thoms says. "There's just one Tellabs intranet—the first place employees go for information and a powerful tool that reinforces our brand, vision, and strategy initiatives."

Significant IT Cost Savings

By consolidating its various intranet sites into one, Tellabs is not only delivering a more consistent message across the company but also making far more efficient use of its human and technology resources.

"At one regional hub office, they had been running a site on an out-of-warranty server that they wanted to retire—which now they can," Mustaly explains. "Considering the number of other Tellabs offices that were or are facing the same situation, we expect to save up to \$50,000 yearly in licensing, maintenance, and support costs with the new intranet."

Solid Foundation for Future Strategic Applications

With the success of the intranet, Mustaly, Thoms, and their colleagues are considering using Office SharePoint Server 2007 as a development platform for strategic applications to support Web development; collaboration with partners and vendors; document, workflow, and contact management; and expense reporting. Tellabs also may extend the Office SharePoint Server 2007 environment to provide the company's mobile users with access to line-of-business databases without the need for a network connection. Tellabs executives view these endeavors, along with the SharePoint MySites project, as making the intranet fundamental to a highly collaborative and productive

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working environment for Tellabs employees.

"Through this intranet deployment, executives and other employees across the company are recognizing the value of Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 for strengthening collaboration, reducing costs, and supporting initiatives for growth and competitiveness," Mustaly says. "This makes us all the more eager to push the technology to the levels that we know it's capable of reaching."

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