

EPSI assists Australian Department of Defence with a performance support solution for a key logistics system

BACKGROUND

The Australian Department of Defence has in excess of 15,000 logistics personnel spread across the world and the organisation has one of the most complex logistic networks, distributing tens of thousands of material units and supplies to global locations on a regular basis. This is akin to managing the logistics of a small city; the key Logistics Software System is, by necessity powerful, broad and in parts, complex.

THE PROBLEM

The Defence Supply Chain Manual (DSCM) is the primary logistic reference manual that governs Defence supply chain operations, with particular emphasis on how to use the existing logistics ERP, SDSS (Standard Defence Supply System). The DSCM however, was a standalone manual hosted on the Defence Restricted Network (DRN) consisting of 11 volumes containing a total of 1,283 documents (in excess of 7,000 pages) that must be referred to separately by SDSS Users when using the system.

Although complete, and delivered on the Defence intranet, the documentation was a challenge to navigate due to its size and complexity. As a result, system users across the world were not able to locate the information they needed within reasonable timeframes. This resulted in errors and process avoidance, causing both minor and significant issues in the management and supply of material.

In addition to the issues of navigation and volume of information, users identified factors such as performance, currency of information due to a quarterly release cycle and no direct correlation between the screen being viewed and relevant information from the DSCM.

A secondary issue was the method of production and management of the documentation itself. With more than 20 regular contributors and frequent improvements to processes, the task of developing, standardising, versioning, handling and publishing large numbers of document files was inefficient and difficult, with numerous version control issues.

Further to the identified inherent issues, Defence is in the process of a functional migration of the Defence primary logistics management system from Mincom's Information Management System (MIMS) Version 4 to MIMS Ellipse platform, presenting the problem of rewriting the existent DSCM content and users adherence to process and procedures.

THE CHALLENGE

To provide an Electronic solution which addressed the identified inherent issues of the existent DSCM by:

- delivering 'moment of need' screen level support to the end user;
- providing integrated business process, business rules and systems help;
- reducing network bandwidth requirement compared with the current solution;
- real time publishing of updates; and
- delivery of an application agnostic solution which will provide the opportunity for Defence to extend the capability across the organisation.

"System users are now often less than 2 seconds away from the help they need using EPSI's Solution"

THE SOLUTION

EPSI's consulting organisation worked closely with the Directorate of Logistics Processes & Procedures to design and deliver a better model for authoring and delivery of the Electronic Supply Chain Manual (ESCM) using a number of Commercial Applications including Author-it and Assistware.

EPSI also delivered Defence tailored training for Authors and developed a flash point End User training to support user adoption of the ESCM and the moment of need help.

THE RESULTS ARE IMPRESSIVE

The ESCM is accessed by 15,000 users with context sensitive help available to 8,000 SDSS users and will provide support for users in the functional migration to MIMS Ellipse.

Users now have access to context sensitive help that takes them directly to the applicable page in the ESCM. This means that users are often less than 2 seconds away from the help they need - making it faster to use the new system than ask a colleague for assistance.

As well as being delivered as a moment of need support system, the ESCM provides users with a much more easily navigable site. Its multifaceted navigation system allows the user to locate the document they are searching for in a variety of ways depending on their current requirement. For example, the one document can be located when navigating by screen code, transaction code or by volume. In addition a powerful search engine provides for fast retrieval of documents regardless of their multi-faceted categorisation.

From day one, user acceptance and adoption of the system has been notable with the authoring group receiving 'fan mail' for their significantly improved system.

The process of creation and maintenance of the new site is significantly improved and more efficient. Authors now use Author-it™ rather than Microsoft Word™ due to its inherent multiuser benefits of group standardisation and version control. The platform also delivers fast creation and updating of the ESCM site as well as the ability to output to Word format when required.

The project was delivered on time and budget and has made an extremely positive impact on staff productivity and accurate usage of this key logistics system.

CONCLUSION

The solution provided and implemented by EPSI's consulting organisation successfully addressed the issues identified by Defence. The long term benefit of the ESCM solution to Defence is that it provides integrated business processes, business rules and system help in a central location. This will improve the quality of data by improving support to end users and enable individuals to perform their business function in a more effective and efficient manner. Logistics governance will be improved as users are able to quickly find the correct documents at the moment they need them.

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