

Case Study Detail

Client

U.S. Marine Corps (USMC)

Project Name

General Officer Slating Application (GOSA)

Project Description

Overview

The U.S. Marine Corps features a population of about 85 general officers – an elite group of the Marines’ highest-level leaders. Every two years, these officers are assigned to a new “billet,” or job opening, either internally within the Marines, or externally within the **U.S. Joint Forces Command**.

All such billets are important leadership roles, but until recently, the process by which these crucial billets were filled was manual and paper-based. The Commandant of the Marine Corps and a handful of high level officers would meet behind closed doors to slate general officers into billets. However, there was no automated system by which to track open billets, or easily analyze which general officers were right for each job.

In 2003, the Marine Corps Commandant requested a technology solution that would re-engineer and systematize the general officer slating process. Thanks to technology partner, InfoReliance Corporation, the Commandant received what he asked for – and more – in just six weeks: the Web-based General Officer Slating Application (GOSA).

Business Challenge

Prior to the development of GOSA, the Marine Commandant and his elite slating team would meet privately to plan the career moves of the Corps’ general officers. But the process lacked automation and consistency. During each slating session, the team members would gather around dry erase boards, plotting out open billets and pouring over hard copy resumes and career summaries to match individuals to open positions.

Problematically, it was difficult to keep those binders of resumes accurate since items on a general officer’s career history changed frequently. So if a general completed a training course or recently changed billets, that information would not always make it into the slating team’s print-outs. As a result, the group was often working off of dated information.

In addition, these decision makers had limited capabilities for analyzing which officers were best suited for each billet based on experience, peer recommendations and even the officers’ personal billet preferences. Because the process was not automated, electronic searches for suitable officers were not possible. Instead, the slating team resorted to manual searches of hard copy officer resumes and spreadsheets.

Finally, the slating process lacked the ability to forecast billets that might open up several years from now. This hindered the Commandant’s ability to plan for the

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long term and ensure that “rising stars” in the general officer population received adequate training and experience that would guarantee their suitability for future leadership positions.

Recognizing these inefficiencies, the Commandant asked an on-site technical contractor to build an automated, Web-based GOSA that would solve the slating team’s business challenges and incorporate rich analytical capabilities. Unfortunately, that individual’s product failed to meet the project’s requirements, so the Commandant went back to the drawing board and invited two contractors to bid on the project – Oracle and InfoReliance Corporation. InfoReliance’s proposed solution impressed the Commandant, who awarded the GOSA project to the Fairfax-based firm in July 2003. The InfoReliance team was tasked with building GOSA within a limited budget, and in just eight short weeks.

Solution

Six weeks into the project, InfoReliance consultants delivered a new and improved GOSA that amazed the Commandant and his fellow slating leaders. Today, the Web-based system is a gold source repository of data on all general officers. It offers users a full view of the current slate, along with a graphical, online depiction of assignments that easily identifies billet gaps and slating conflicts. More importantly, it enables users to instantly comb through lists of eligible general officers and analyze which of them are best suited for an open billet.

Using classic Microsoft ASP.net and SQL Server technology, InfoReliance built the GOSA solution around a rules-based processing engine that assigns requirements to each open billet. For example, if an open position requires a Lieutenant General who has served in a joint billet and who cannot be retiring within the next two years, GOSA users can stipulate that and search the pool of qualified officers accordingly.

The system matches officers to billets based on three key data points:

- The billet’s job requirements (i.e., who is most qualified?)
- The input of three-star generals (i.e., who comes most recommended?)
- Officer preferences (i.e., of those who are qualified, who has expressed interest in a particular job? General officers are able to indicate their top three assignment choices on a Web site that feeds into GOSA.)

Because the system is Web-based and integrated with other manpower/human

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resource systems within the Marine Corps, GOSA data is always current. Career resumes are updated in real-time every time there is a change to an officer's job status or training history, which means that slating decisions are informed by the most up-to-date intelligence.

Also worth noting are GOSA's long-term planning capabilities. Thanks to the system, the Commandant and his team can view when they will need a general officer to fill a future leadership position – and identify candidates who might fill those future needs. For example, if the Commandant sees that he'll need a Major General to assume an open position in 2008, he can use GOSA to pinpoint a rising Brigadier General to fill that role and ensure that he or she receives proper training and experiences that will qualify them for the future billet.

Best of all, GOSA is easy to use and navigate. Its intuitive user interface allows users to “drag and drop” individual profiles onto open billets in order to slate officers and perform instant online searches and forecasts.

Results

In transforming an antiquated human capital management process, InfoReliance's GOSA has received high-level applause from Marine Corps leadership. And interestingly, the project has been validated and praised by the private sector, as well. The Marines' General Officer Matters Officer (GOMO) sits on an executive talent roundtable of national business leaders. After the GOMO demonstrated GOSA to this prestigious group, leaders from companies such as General Motors, Barnes & Noble and Caterpillar lauded the system and revealed that the Marine Corps now manages talent in a similar fashion to a Fortune 500 company.

The benefits of GOSA are self evident:

- The Marine Corps Commandant and his slating team can perform their manpower assignment jobs more efficiently and effectively.
 - The user-friendly, Web-based system allows users to search, analyze and assign general officers quickly.
 - Thanks to the time saved by GOSA, the slating team can devote more of its time to other responsibilities.
- GOSA has restored credibility in the officer slating process by ensuring that decision makers make informed assignment choices.
 - Real-time updating of career information makes GOSA the gold source repository of data on general officers.

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- As a result, slating decisions are now based on the most up-to-date manpower information available within the Marine Corps.
- The system has armed the Commandant and his slating team with long-term planning tools to ensure that future Marine staffing needs are covered.
- GOSA has streamlined the officer slating process and introduced standard operating procedures to this important exercise.
- The system's flexible architecture can easily evolve as the Marine Corps' business processes change over time.