

Case Study Detail

Client
U.S. Marine Corps (USMC)

Project Name
Manpower & Reserve Affairs (M&RA)

Project Description

Overview

The Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA) Department of the U.S. Marine Corps performs human capital – or manpower– functions for the nation’s active duty Marines, reserve Marines, retired Marines and their families. One of the largest departments within Marine Corps Headquarters, M&RA serves as the heartbeat of the Corps by managing a variety of mission-critical manpower-related activities for hundreds of thousands of individuals nationwide. Duties include everything from personnel assignments and career counseling, to promotions and performance evaluations. Other M&RA divisions manage services for Marine spouses, family members and retired Marines. So whether a Marine wants to view available job assignments, study training necessary for a promotion, or seek career or personal counseling, he or she must consult M&RA.

However, until recently, this vital organization was not always easy to navigate. Recognizing this, M&RA worked with InfoReliance Corporation to explore a Web-based portal solution to its customer service and organizational challenges.

Business Challenge

While M&RA played a vital service role to its constituents, it suffered from the most basic of customer service problems. Most notably, unless Marines and other stakeholders knew how the M&RA Department was organized, they wouldn’t know whom they should call in the organization to get their questions answered. Unfortunately, M&RA’s dated and poorly organized Web site didn’t help matters.

“Today’s tech-savvy users generally turn to the Web for personnel information, and they expect to find what they need quickly and easily,” said Jeff Crosslin, director of operations at InfoReliance and the M&RA portal project manager. “But thanks to its difficult-to-navigate Web site, M&RA was not providing a valuable online information resource to its constituents.”

Rather, the existing Web site confused users by burying contact names and other information deep within the site. In addition, the home page and user interface was counter-intuitive, with many site visitors unable to discern where to begin.

The root of the problem was the home-grown, Lotus Notes®-based Web site that M&RA had been managing. It featured thousands of unique pages, but no official process for creating and posting online content. As a result, information was seldom vetted before going live, so there was no accountability concerning the type of content that was posted online. Additionally, various

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Web pages suffered from an inconsistent look and feel, and written Web copy lacked a uniform style. These factors combined to create an unorganized Web site that was incongruent with the efficiency and cohesiveness that characterized M&RA.

M&RA knew that it required a modern, scaleable portal solution that would centralize manpower information into one easy-to-navigate Web environment.

Solution

The Marines' M&RA Department selected InfoReliance Corporation to implement the portal project, based on InfoReliance's excellent track record building results-driven manpower and portal solutions for the Marine Corps.

Due to an existing license agreement, M&RA requested that the system be built around Oracle Portal® – a customizable solution that enables companies to quickly build, administer and deploy enterprise portals that are standards-driven, scalable, secure and dynamic.

The InfoReliance team began by designing an easy-to-navigate architecture for the portal that would showcase M&RA's brand within a sophisticated, consistent looking Web site. Once this framework was built, InfoReliance began the daunting task of migrating thousands of Lotus Notes pages into the newly designed portal.

The end product is a comprehensive, graphical layout and navigation, with a home page that directs users to one of five pathways:

- Active Duty Marines
- Reserve Marines
- Civilian Marines
- Veteran
- Families

Each pathway guides users to more easy-to-navigate Web pages that feature information and services geared specifically to the user. For example, an active duty Marine can now use the site to locate the phone number of his or her monitor – the officer responsible for duty assignments. They can also view available billets – or job openings – and study promotions for which they might be eligible. Similarly, retired Marines can use the portal to easily access information about military awards, retirement and veterans' benefits. So no matter what the personnel task at hand, today's M&RA portal is a gateway to vital information for thousands of individuals.

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In the past, if this data was available at all, it was not secured and therefore in violation of Marine Corps privacy and data security policies. Today, the site is secured, ensuring that sensitive personal data, and any data deemed sensitive by the portal administrator, are protected and only available to authenticated users.

Armed with its new portal, M&RA now needed a way to facilitate convenient, consistent content management of the site. InfoReliance delivered once again, not only by training M&RA staff members to post and update content on the new portal, but by writing content and style guides for every content manager.

“Our style guides helped foster the style and tone consistencies that the previous Web site was lacking,” said Shab Nassirpour, a consultant and chief Web designer on the InfoReliance team. “We offered guidelines on what voice to write in, which words to capitalize and how to ensure that Web pages are 508 compliant. As a result, today’s M&RA portal looks and reads like a cohesive Web environment.”

Additionally, unauthorized Web postings became a thing of the past since InfoReliance helped M&RA implement a standard content approval process within the organization.

Results

With more than 1,000 registered users and an average of 10,000 unique visitors per day, thousands count on today’s www.manpower.usmc.mil for all of their Marine Corps personnel needs. The portal boasts an attractive, sophisticated look and feel, while the content management system has enabled hundreds of content managers to update and produce Web pages without having to acquire new technical skills.

Other benefits include:

- Improved navigation of the M&RA Web site – and the organization itself.
- 24x7, secure user access.
- “Look and feel” consistency across all M&RA Web pages.
- Centralized control over thousands of disparate Web pages.
- Easy enforcement of M&RA’s online standards and content approval procedures.
- Scalability and lower total cost of ownership (TCO) for M&RA.

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In addition, the portal has empowered the Marine Corps to obtain data for a high visibility human capital management initiative within the organization – the **Manpower Performance Indicators**. These indicators are designed to offer real-time snapshots of the status of the Marine Corps, the number and composition of troops deployed, the number of troops deployed for more than 360 days, etc. Because the M&RA portal's back end personnel records contain raw data related to these indicators, the Marines and InfoReliance have built applications that integrate with the portal to access and analyze key personnel data that feed the manpower performance indicators.