

Case Study Detail

Client
U.S. Marine Corps (USMC)

Project Name
Training & Education Command (TECOM)

Project Description

Overview

The mission of the United States Marine Corps’ Training and Education Command (TECOM) is “to develop, coordinate, resource, execute, and evaluate training and education concepts, policies, plans and programs to ensure Marines are prepared to meet the challenges of present and future operational environments.” In other words, TECOM facilitates the training of individual Marines and qualifies them for assignments in the field.

TECOM oversees formal instruction for its Marines at more than 170 schoolhouses located at more than 50 military bases worldwide. In addition, it offers correspondence courses through the Marine Corps Institute; professional development courses through the various Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) Academies; a variety of education and training seminars, computer-based and online courses; and a range of voluntary educational opportunities through universities, colleges and trade schools. Training is conducted and recorded by task, condition and standard with the single focus on improved unit combat readiness.

After recognizing shortcoming in its legacy information management systems, TECOM spent the past several years modernizing the way the Marine Corps manages its training and education functions. Disparate legacy systems were integrated and streamlined, and vital training information was moved online. And as TECOM rebuilt this Web-based environment to house its training and education functions, the logical next step was a comprehensive online portal that would serve as a gateway to all TECOM information and facilitate content management and team collaboration.

Business Challenge

TECOM’s portal solution grew out of its experience working with Fairfax, Virginia-based InfoReliance Corporation. Beginning in 2000, InfoReliance worked closely with the Marines to create the TECOM Integrated Management System (TIMS). Today, this comprehensive Web-based application enables TECOM commanders to manage and analyze critical knowledge about the Marine Corps’ training and education activities.

TIMS launched TECOM into a new era of Web-based, real-time information management – but it was only the beginning, as more than 100 additional TECOM Web sites still existed in stove piped legacy IT environments. So while TIMS was a monumental first step, the Marine Corps still faced numerous challenges managing its vast amounts of training information and knowledge.

It was often difficult for end user Marines to locate educational information

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that would enhance their knowledge and combat readiness. For example, with training data buried within multiple legacy systems, deployed troops would have trouble accessing the latest information on road-side bombs or other relevant topics. To supply Marines with valuable information, hard copy training lessons or CD-ROMs had to be mailed to troops in the field –and by the time this knowledge reached them, it was already out of date. Finding lecture notes or other course information was not easy, either. It took involved detective work on the part of frustrated Marines who had to make multiple phone calls or hunt for training knowledge through unorganized server files.

It was clear that TECOM required a Web-based central access point for all of the Marine Corps’ training and education information. However, a crucial factor – the launch of the Navy/Marine Corps Intranet (NMCI) – would impact any online solution the Marines pursued. NCMI prohibited the Marines from housing their own network servers. It also eliminated most Web-related technical positions within the Corps, which meant TECOM would lose the Web masters who were skilled at publishing online HTML content.

Therefore, in addition to needing a single Web-based environment to house training content without any on-site software, TECOM also required a convenient way for non-technical subject-matter experts to publish dynamic content to the Web. Project requirements included the ability to:

- Easily and accurately search, find and retrieve TECOM-related information – regardless of its location or storage type.
- Implement an easy-to-use content management system that featured a workflow approval process for online documents.
- Provide automatic notification of changes to documents and other important information to appropriate team members.
- Preserve (and prune) versions of training documents.
- Ensure that document security was maintained with a minimum amount of administrative effort.
- Provide a scalable solution that met the needs of future growth.

With these requirements in mind, InfoReliance recommended a natural technology solution to TECOM – *a Web-based collaborative portal with content management capabilities.*

Solution

InfoReliance began developing the **TECOM Portal** in 2003. The one-stop solution was built around Microsoft SharePoint® Services, an integrated

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portfolio of collaboration and communication services designed to connect people, information, processes and systems.

Featuring attractive graphic design and intuitive navigation, the scaleable TECOM Portal unites the organization's 200+ disparate systems into a single online information gateway. As a result, more than 200,000 end user Marines enjoy convenient, anytime access to the training and education intelligence they need. For example, in just two to three mouse clicks, a user can access everything from distance learning courses, to lecture notes from the Marine Corps' accredited educational institutions, to recommended books in the Commandant's Reading Program.

In addition, each user's Portal home page is customized with targeted content relevant to the user's personal situation. That means that every time a Marine logs on to the Portal, he or she will be greeted with training and educational information relevant to their pay grade, geography, rank and training status. The Portal also features various interactive components such as surveys, chat rooms and discussion boards that facilitate real-time collaboration.

To meet the needs of the TECOM subject matter experts maintaining the portal, InfoReliance also implemented a user-friendly **content management system** built around commercial solutions from Ektron, Inc[®]. By providing user-friendly, template-based Web publishing technologies, the solution enabled non-technical content owners within TECOM to build and maintain sophisticated Web pages quickly and easily. It centralized control of TECOM's Web page management and ensured a consistent look and feel throughout the Portal pages. Today, thanks to InfoReliance's solution, Marine Corps users need only be familiar with the simple concepts of operating Microsoft Word[®] to perform Web master duties.

The TECOM Portal project was a significant undertaking for InfoReliance, which integrated more than 46,498 KB of data and more than 200 discreet Web sites into the new Portal. Then, after launching a pilot version of the Portal, InfoReliance trained hundreds of TECOM content managers to use the technology in just eight weeks. Today, InfoReliance even manages a multi-media production studio for TECOM, converting audio and video from the field (e.g., lessons learned in Iraq) into streaming digital files that are posted immediately online.

Results

Today, thousands of Marines use the TECOM Portal to access and manage training information and facilitate knowledge sharing. And since its launch

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in 2005, the Portal and content management solution have provided financial benefits, process efficiencies and training quality enhancements.

Benefits to end-user Marines:

- By enabling individual Marine users to locate critical TECOM data quickly and easily, the Portal saves users significant amounts of time and effort.
- Marines benefit from anytime, anywhere access to up-to-date training knowledge, thereby contributing to their combat readiness.

Benefits to TECOM staff:

- By automating content management processes and integrating data, the TECOM portal has significantly reduced administrative burdens for staff members and content managers.
- Non-technical content managers are able to create and post sophisticated Web pages easily, with minimal training. Further, the solution empowers individual users who no longer have to wait for HTML Web programmers to post content for them.

Benefits to the U.S. Marine Corps:

- The project has enabled TECOM to evolve from a static, information-only resource into a fully operational system featuring dynamic, relevant content. Data is updated and posted in real-time, making the TECOM Portal an up-to-date resource that all Marines can use.
- TECOM's new content management system has centralized control of heterogeneous Web content. In addition to a consistent look and feel among Portal Web pages, the solution fosters easy enforcement of online standards and content approval procedures.
- The TECOM Portal has reduced the total cost of system ownership for the Marines.
- Finally, the solution helped TECOM work within the technical confines of the Navy/Marine Corp Intranet (NCMI) project.