



MODERNISING PROJECT MANAGEMENT AT AUSTRALIA POST

Sensei Project Solutions has delivered its Project, Portfolio and Work Management solution to more than 100 users at Australia Post. By modernising its Project and Portfolio Management, Australia Post expects an improvement in visibility and governance, while providing project managers with suitable tools to track their work.

With a project management office lumbered with legacy systems and decade-old heavily customised software, Australia Post engaged Sensei for the delivery of its Project, Portfolio and Work Management solution for Microsoft Project Online. Just 6 months later, the postal services provider is seeing the benefits of easier to use tools for project management, moving it towards greater visibility and control of capital initiatives valued at up to half a billion dollars every year.

Established in 1975 as the successor to the Postmaster General's Department, the Australian Postal Corporation is generally known simply as Australia Post. The government-owned enterprise provides nationwide postal services through more than 4,400 metropolitan retail outlets and 2,500 rural locations. The company employs about 35,000 people and has annual revenues topping \$7.5 billion.

Andrew Jolly, Senior Project Manager / Technology Engagement at Australia Post explains that a variety of projects comprise an extensive portfolio. "Our commitment is 'we always deliver', and that rests on anything from capital works such as rolling out new facilities, acquiring new vehicles like the EV fleet, or new software implementations and tools to make the jobs of the workforce easier. I'd say we have more breadth than most other companies given the diverse nature of our operations."

COMPANY NAME
Australia Post

INDUSTRY
Postal Services

LOCATION(S)
Australian National Organisation

HEADQUARTERS
Melbourne, Australia

SIZE
35,000+

SITUATION

Technology changes fast and what was fit for purpose a decade ago has been surpassed by better, faster, and easier to use solutions. With a SharePoint and Project Server 2010 implementation, Australia Post workers had difficulty accessing their project management software. As an on-premises deployment, the only way to access the system was through the corporate network and a VPN connection, while the heavily customised software had become difficult to use and maintain.

"Clunky is a nice way of putting it," recalls Jolly. "As a project manager, your ability to do your job was limited by the software. It was hard to get into, the reporting would crash, it wasn't easy or intuitive and it just was not effective."

As an organisation which relies extensively on contract project managers, he says an obsolete tool made it difficult to maintain discipline across the workforce.



"Even though it was a governance requirement to use the old Project Online, project managers were doing the minimum. After all, when it fell over, it meant being held up and unable to meet deadlines. And there was no real incentive to go in and use it after work hours to catch up, as it was just that bad."

Rather than upgrading the on-premise software, Australia Post instead opted for a complete redeployment taking advantage of cloud technology which would eliminate the access issues.

SOLUTION

After testing the market with a formal Request for Information, Sensei Project Solutions came to Australia Post's attention. "There was a clear value proposition in the approach to Project Online with Sensei's Project, Portfolio and Work Management solution which showed how it could increase effectiveness and governance on the one hand, and win the hearts and minds of our project managers on the other," says Jolly.

As a cloud solution in the Microsoft stable, he adds that Sensei's Project, Portfolio and Work Management solution neatly fit with Australia Post's move to Microsoft 365. "The working group and the Capital Management team recognised the close alignment which would also mean fewer hoops to jump through from an ISO27001 perspective, as well as other quality certification processes," he adds.

Sensei's Project, Portfolio and Work Management solution is specifically designed to work seamlessly with Project Online to provide a best practice, easy-to-use solution that leverages the Microsoft platform. It provides comprehensive reporting, workflows, training, and process support in all key PPM areas from project intake and prioritisation, resource and demand management, budgeting, and cost tracking, planning and collaboration, to Project and Portfolio reporting and PMO governance.

As a pre-configured solution, Sensei's Project, Portfolio and Work Management solution is readily understood by seasoned project managers, yet accessible enough for those new to the discipline to get started.

Jolly says the 6 month implementation through a COVID environment was potentially fraught. "But thanks to the unparalleled professionalism of the Sensei team, the way it was handled was exemplary. And bear in mind, we'd never implemented into Microsoft 365 before and we had never used PowerApps."

He adds that he cannot speak more highly of the Sensei team. "They were proactive and didn't hide behind a Statement of Work and proved conservative with Time and Materials estimates. In one case, a change request came in at less than half the original quote. That speaks volumes to integrity and the partnership approach."

Moreover, adds Jolly, Sensei's Project, Portfolio and Work Management solution configuration for Australia Post doesn't represent a substantial customisation of Project Online. "For our implementation, we wanted 'out of the box with minor tweaks', and through a thorough discovery process up-front, that's what Sensei gave us."

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*Tony Citera, GM Capital Management and Procurement,
Australia Post*

BENEFITS REALISED



By using Sensei's Project, Portfolio and Work Management solution Australia Post will see an improvement in visibility and governance, while providing project managers with suitable tools to track their work.



PROGRESS TRACKING

The Project Management Office can accurately track progress of all projects.



PROJECT SETUP

Project Managers can enjoy an improved user experience which is smooth, easy, and intuitive. The solution has reduced project setup time by up to 85 percent.



IMPROVED SCHEDULING

The Project Management Office can plan their schedules in advance and allocate personnel accordingly.



FORECASTING & VISIBILITY

Improved visibility and control of capital initiatives which are valued at up to half a billion dollars every year.

RESULTS

"Flexibility to cater for project managers of differing skill levels was key," says Jolly. "We have a large transitional workforce, with upwards of 100 project managers working with us at any time. Some are experienced and follow methodologies including PRINCE2 or PMBOK or PMI; for these individuals, Sensei's Project and Portfolio Management solution is easily picked up and they work accordingly."

Then, he adds, there are those for whom project management is completely new. "In Sensei's Project and Portfolio Management solution, they have a tool they can pick up and get going with right away, providing a governance structure without needing 6 months of training."


With the Sensei Project and Portfolio Management solution now being live for 6 months, Jolly says performance and results are outstanding. "The initial setup and updates for each of these project takes around an hour and a half. That compares very favourably with the previous 8 hours of frustration after being kicked out by the VPN."

Describing the user experience as smooth, easy, and intuitive, he says there's a clear crossover from Microsoft 365 applications to Sensei's Project and Portfolio Management solution. "That means our people know how to do each action. And then, with the integration with upstream finance and other systems, a lot is prepopulated, reducing any need for doubly entry. It's more a case of review and submit."

Tony Citra, GM Capital Management and Procurement has also seen a range of improvements. "With a relatively small investment with Sensei and the Microsoft Power Platform, Australia Post has experienced an 80% efficiency gain in initiating and managing projects across an annual portfolio of ~\$500m. Added to that, we now have increased visibility of project performance right up to CEO level, enabling efficient prioritisation of projects to deliver against strategic goals. We can more accurately see which dial we need to move and link that back to project delivery."

Ultimately, both believe that Sensei's Project and Portfolio Management solution will contribute to improved governance across Australia Post's extensive projects portfolio through broader user adoption which in turn delivers greater visibility. Jolly is confident in the value delivered. "Would I recommend Sensei to others? Absolutely. The product can't be questioned, and it's backed by absolute professionalism," he concludes.

CONTACT INFORMATION

 +61 (03) 9036 3423

 LetsChat@Sensei.Cloud

 www.sensei.cloud