



SENSEI BRINGS CLARITY AND EFFICIENCY TO SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY'S IT PROJECTS

Backed by the support of Sensei Project Solutions (Sensei), Melbourne's Swinburne University of Technology has introduced a structured way of handling its projects in the information technology department using Microsoft Project Online.

Over the course of five years, Swinburne has matured its project management capability, so it achieves optimal results across multiple concurrent initiatives and has more recently introduced Sensei's Reporting Hub for greater insights and control across all projects.

Swinburne University of Technology (Swinburne) is an Australian public university based in Melbourne, Victoria. It was founded in 1908 as the Eastern Suburbs Technical College by George Swinburne in order to serve those without access to further education in Melbourne's eastern suburbs. Today it has a student roll of more than 23,000.

SITUATION

Like many large organisations, the IT department serving Swinburne runs multiple projects in its efforts to provide employees and students with the services required for their daily activities, says Christie Margin, PMO Team Leader at the University. "Those projects range from large implementations of new software we might need, like Learning Management Systems, down to smaller initiatives like refurbishing classrooms. In dollar terms, it's anything from multi-million dollar projects, down to some that might be \$40,000 for new audio-visual equipment."

COMPANY NAME
Swinburne University of Technology

INDUSTRY
Education

LOCATION(S)
Melbourne, Australia

HEADQUARTER
Melbourne, Australia

SIZE
4000+

Prior to bringing in Sensei, Ms Margin says the challenges were clear: "Project data was difficult to get hold of, it was hard to see where any given project was, we didn't have accurate resource planning- that is, who was working on what and when they were available – and we didn't have good costing information."

With a constant portfolio of multiple projects running at any given time, the distinct lack of coordination and efficiency demanded a better way if Swinburne was to be sure of getting the best results from every initiative. "One of the major issues we had related to time sheeting.

We had a lot of Business as Usual teams working on various projects, but no way of capturing the cost and allocating it to the individual project actuals so those specific initiatives could carry the cost," Ms Margin explains.



SOLUTION

Ms Margin says Sensei's deep understanding of structured work was essential in helping Swinburne get a better handle on its projects. "This was particularly evident in the time sheeting challenge; Sensei quickly got an understanding of the need to create and configure timesheets with built in approvals which would let each project manager check and verify time spent on their initiatives."

Most importantly, Sensei also provided training which enables Swinburne to self-manage roll-out and manage time sheeting within its Microsoft Project Online solution. "We relied on Sensei to provide the training materials, too, including reference guides and documentation. This was a big help, because while our contractors are accustomed to using timesheets, a lot of our long-term staffers weren't. And for the system to work well, everyone has to use it."

Another major improvement introduced by Sensei is portfolio reporting, in terms of which Swinburne's IT department can easily review the status of all projects. For this, Sensei has deployed a customised version of its Reporting Hub solution, an Azure-hosted data warehouse for Microsoft PPM. Reporting Hub synchronizes Project Online data and also allows for reporting across Line of Business systems.

"We'd initially had a portfolio report built in Project Online ages ago, but it just didn't suit our needs, so we asked Sensei to come up with a new one. They did that by taking two rounds of inputs from project managers and the IT department to get a clear understanding of what the people working with it wanted. This was crucial, because if you leave out the perspective of either side – the project managers or the line of business folks – you end up with what we had before, a report which isn't fit for purpose."

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"It is fairly easy to get up to speed using Project Online; now, with Sensei, we have built some minimum standards for project management around the tool. That includes scheduling, issues tracking and of course the all-important time sheeting component, which provides for accurate resourcing and chargebacks. And all core mandatory project documents are stored in Project Online".

Christie Margin, PMO Team Leader

BENEFITS REALISED



REPORTING HUB & PROJECT ONLINE

Reporting at an executive level has come a long way with Reporting Hub. Swinburne University can now publish a portfolio report every month to the executive team allowing them to keep track of everything.



REPORTING

Key Stakeholders and departments can easily review the status of all projects.



EASE OF INFORMATION ACCESS

Easy access to project related information allows the PMO to do simple health checks.



SCHEDULING AND ISSUES TRACKING

Project Managers have access to a standard toolset that they are familiar with which provides for accurate resourcing and chargebacks.



TIME SHEETS

Project Managers can create timesheet tasks with built in approvals which let them check and verify time spent on their initiatives.

RESULTS

Thanks to Sensei's support, Ms Margin says Swinburne's IT department has a standard toolset most project managers have experienced before. "It is fairly easy to get up to speed using Project Online; now, with Sensei, we have built some minimum standards for project management around the tool. That includes scheduling, issues tracking and of course the all-important time sheeting component, which provides for accurate resourcing and chargebacks. And all core mandatory project documents are stored in Project Online."

What that means in practice, she explains, is ease of information access. "It's now straightforward to do a quick health check on the administrative side of projects. We know where everything is instead of digging around on network drives or having to ask people for stuff on personal devices."


The value of this capability cannot be underestimated, stresses Ms Margin. "If, for example, there's a changeover of project manager, a new person can pick right up where the other left off before."

Reporting at an executive level has come a long way with Reporting Hub. "We now publish a portfolio report every month. It goes to the CIO and the executive team, pumping out the data necessary to keep track of everything. It just works."

Sensei has helped us develop our Project Online skills further and they've supported us to have a better understanding of the SharePoint side of things. We're now able to do a lot of the reporting ourselves.

In short, Sensei has embedded knowledge within our Project Management Office. And whenever we need additional help, nothing is too much trouble: they are there to augment our own capabilities as required."

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