



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

Year:

2013

Status:

Laureate

Organization Name:

Office of Management and Budget

Organization URL:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/>

Project Name:

MAX Federal Community

Please select the category in which you are submitting your entry.

Collaboration

Please provide an overview of the nominated project. Describe the problem it was intended to solve, the technology or approach used, how it was innovative and any technical or other challenges that had to be overcome for successful implementation and adoption. (In 300 words or less.)

For many years, Federal agency budget offices relied on basic office software to prepare and justify complex, multi-billion dollar budgets. Few automated systems were available to support budget formulation and execution activities, with little ability to seamlessly share information and best practices. The Budget Formulation and Execution Line of Business (BFELoB) was created to provide Federal budget professionals with options for automated, cost-effective capabilities supporting all phases of the budget process. OMB's Budget Systems Branch (BSB) took the lead role in developing the technologies that support this goal. Today, BSB hosts, operates, and continues to enhance a suite of cloud-based technology services that support collaboration, knowledge management,

document creation, data collection, business analytics, and other functions across the Federal government. Collectively, these services are called MAX (see figure in Appendix 1). The MAX Federal Community is the most widely used of these services. Although initially developed to support the Federal budget process, the MAX Federal Community has grown rapidly in features, popularity and usage. The MAX Community service is now one of the largest collaboration environments in the U.S. government, serving over 76,000 users at more than 100 government agencies worldwide. Its utility goes well beyond the budget community: it has supported collaborations on topics as diverse as Federal budgeting to coordination of responses to natural disasters in Haiti and Japan. The aggressive adoption of MAX applications and the MAX Federal Community in particular demonstrate that the BFELoB is providing significant value to its members and that government staff more broadly are able to use these same systems at a very low cost to serve a variety of social, humanitarian, economic, and strategic needs.

When was this project implemented or last updated? (Please specify month and year.) Has it incorporated new technologies and/or other innovations since its initial deployment? (In 300 words or less.)

MAX was launched in 2008 and continually evolves, using an Agile methodology to implement enhancements in anticipation of user needs. By using an open standards based architecture, new features can be added swiftly and at lower cost. For example, in designing the MAX Community, BSB first looked at commercial alternatives. This analysis made it clear that, if we were successful, we would need additional software licenses. To constrain costs, we would need to restrict access to the system, inhibiting our ability to achieve open collaboration. Instead, we based the Community around a low-cost commercial product that offered baseline functionality but significant opportunities for enhancements based on open standards. The Community now exceeds the capabilities of commercial peers. For example, it became apparent early on that user collaboration would be aided if they could share desktops without needing to be in the same office together. Through the open platform we created, the MAX Shared Desktop was implemented, creating an environment that now enables collaboration across documents, data, and desktops. The MAX Federal Community was significantly upgraded in 2012. Working closely with usability experts and end users from across multiple agencies, the MAX team rolled out a new version of the Community with enhanced search features ("find people" and "find stuff"), improved functionality and navigation, and a new friendlier look and feel.

If this is a previously submitted project that has been significantly updated and/or expanded, please describe the nature of the update here. (In 300 words or less.)

When we nominated the MAX Community in 2012 there were over 53,000 users at 43 agencies. Today MAX is used by over 76,000 users at more than 100 agencies as it continues to be embraced government-wide. The MAX suite now includes: MAX Community, MAX Collect, MAX Analytics, MAX Authentication, MAX Shared Desktop. The suite now serves much broader needs across government even down to the infrastructure level. For example, MAX Authentication is the only federated, 2-factor, HSPD12-compliant authentication mechanism in government. Agencies such as NASA are now integrated into the MAX Authentication platform, so users at that agency are automatically authorized to use MAX applications through their desktop sign-on measures. Aside from providing significant simplification for the user, MAX Authentication offers government CIOs and staff members an easy, cost-effective, and secure way to provide access to key government applications. The innovations pioneered for MAX are changing how government implements and manages IT.

Is implementation of the project complete? If no, please describe the project's phases and which phase the project is now in. (In 300 words or less.)

As described above, MAX is a continually evolving project with new enhancements being added over time. The system is mature but, under an Agile software development methodology, always continues to improve.

Please provide at least one example of how the technology project has benefited a specific individual or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work. (In 300 words or less.)

The MAX Community was originally built to serve the collaboration needs of budget analysts, a community of approximately 4,000 people. Other Federal staff quickly identified how it might help them, too, and the system was able to accommodate new communities of interest quickly. Today the MAX suite of systems (see Appendix 1) is utilized across the Federal government for financial management, budget formulation, budget apportionment, collaboration, and authentication. These include the government's centralized budget system (MAX A-11), collaboration (MAX Community), data collection (MAX Collect), online meetings (MAX Shared Desktop), and user authentication and authorization (MAX Authentication). The MAX Community is now one of the largest collaboration environments in the U.S. government. It allows users to share documents, data, and meetings in real time through an open standards-based



wiki platform using any Web browser. Anyone in a Federal government agency can now utilize the Community, and the platform is being employed for initiatives critical to our country's health and future. The Community serves as a knowledge base for multiple government lines of business: budgeting, performance, Recovery Act, grants, financial management, homeland security, e-government, and many others. It supports major business process improvements across government operations by providing an accessible and open knowledge management, sharing, and collaboration service. For example, through the Community: The Administration shared information concerning the nation's response to the threat of H1N1; the government coordinated responses to hurricanes and other natural disasters; agencies were able to respond to American Reinvestment and Recovery Act requirements; federal employees quickly and efficiently provided feedback on President Obama's open government initiative; federal attorneys share information related to E-Discovery requirements; budget officers are able to respond to data calls and questions more effectively.

Would this project be considered an innovation, a best practice or other notable advancement that could be adopted by or tailored for other organizations and uses? If yes, please describe that here. (In 300 words or less.)

The MAX Community is notable for its innovative use of technology in government, the methodology and governance that drive its development and operation, and the breadth of scope it captures. Shared First and Cloud: The MAX team is leading by example by designing every application to be Shared First MAX applications are available as a Cloud service to all Federal agencies. Technology innovation: MAX capitalizes on the reuse of COTS and open source software unified through an open platform and web-based services, which are then made available across government. Methodology and Governance: BSB utilized an Agile methodology for implementation of the MAX services. BSB turned away from traditional approaches to embrace open standards that could enable continual improvement. At the same time, BSB embraced a philosophy of services development, rather than system development. This has driven its focus on developing tools and services that can be broadly adopted at minimal cost, saving the government money through strategic design and aggressive sharing of capabilities. Breadth of Scope: MAX was designed to serve the core needs of the budget community. It now services financial management, homeland protection, e-government, disaster response, and many more lines of business. By thinking beyond their box, the BFELoB and BSB have used the government's money wisely, to create broadly applicable tools that address challenges in a broad range of domains.