



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

Status:

Laureate

Year:

2013

Organization Name:

Schizophrenia Society of Canada

Organization URL:

<http://www.schizophrenia.ca/>

Project Name:

SSC goes Virtual

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

Sustainability

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 the Schizophrenia Society of Canada, technology was not a luxury, it was an urgent necessity. With no government funding, SSC was wholly dependent on donations. But things were looking bad. Funds were running low, & SSC could barely meet admin costs. For the first time SSC showed a deficit position. Without additional funding, reserves would be exhausted in a year. These tough times called for bold decisions. The management and Betty Penny, SSC's long-standing consultant, got together to take stock. Soon, the answer was clear. The green & virtual model was the way to go. Based on the philosophy of Reduce/Reuse/Recycle, the head office would be closed, functions would be redistributed to affiliated Provincial Societies, and the SSC would go virtual. But a

strong technical backbone was needed. A solution that would allow SSC to perform its functions seamlessly while transitioning to the virtual model and allow teams across Canada to work together. Cloud collaboration with HyperOffice was the answer. Cloud collaboration software was ideal since it is specifically designed to help remote teams work together and share information. HyperOffice was chosen because it integrates multiple collaboration tools in a central "virtual office". Plus, HyperOffice was fully hosted, simple and had training resources, putting no additional burden on SSC's funds for IT staff/trainers. HyperOffice is used by SSC in a variety of ways, from scanning and uploading documents and allowing remote access, coordinating and tracking joint tasks, sharing contacts and schedules, creating an SSC-branded email for everybody, and organizing all information related to specific offices or committees in "group workspaces". Over 3 years, SSC has saved close to \$52,000 dollars in admin costs. By using resources in affiliated offices, it is able to reinvest funds in the cause. The "virtual model" also allows it access to talent and resources across Canada. Plus, transitioning to a "paperless model".

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.)

The project was implemented in 2009. The SSC started out with basic team tools, mainly document management. Over 3 years of use, it has gradually expanded use to enhanced collaboration functionality as it became more and more comfortable with the "virtual working" environment. Additional feature like project management to coordinate team effort, and intranet landing pages to customize the experience of different teams have been implemented.

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.)

The SSC has achieved the initial objective of the implementation: to find a way to allow distributed offices and remote workers to work together and share information efficiently. However, there is still room to take virtual collaboration to the next level with advanced and cutting-edge collaboration functionality like mobile and tablet access, organizational social networking etc. Although this is not planned, if SSC feels the need, it will organically adopt these features since they are available in HyperOffice.



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 Society has saved close to \$52,000 over three years because of drastically reduced administrative costs and shared resources. Not bound to a single physical office, the Society has access to a wider pool of human resources spread across the country. Shared online documents and email has enabled the Society to reduce use of paper and reduce cost of transmission through postal mail. Remote and instant access to shared information and communication is more efficient for people working with SSC as well as for board members.

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.)

This project should be recognized as a best practice. Low cost and robust online collaboration software are widely available to organizations to enable them to cut operational costs, enhance teamwork and productivity, and cultivate remote teams for their cause, which can contribute without being in a single location. However, actual awareness and adoption of these technologies remains low in the nonprofit segment, and represents a significant missed opportunity.