

REALIZE GREATER VALUE from your IT investment



Project Highlights

Customer

Canada Post

Challenge

Modernize intranet system to increase employee collaboration and engagement

Project Duration

12 months (pilot to deployment)

Products & Technologies Deployed

Innovapost's OneDegree™
next-generation employee directory

Connecting and Engaging Employees at Canada Post with OneDegree™

Innovapost recently helped Canada Post transform its intranet service into a next-generation communications tool that is capturing knowledge, disseminating information and increasing employee collaboration.

For more than nine years, Canada Post had relied on Intrapost, the organization's intranet system, to provide employees with pertinent organizational information. By 2008, however, it was clear to managers at Canada Post that the service was in need of an overhaul.

"Intrapost was a legacy system that needed new features, a new design and an improved look and feel," recalls Brian Beehler, Director of Social Media at Canada Post. "We began to think about how we could incorporate Web 2.0 and social media functionality to both improve the functionality and spur additional user interest in the system."

Beehler was also interested in expanding the reach of Intrapost's communication capabilities. "Canada Post has a large number of employees who are on the road, working in remote locations or performing work that does not require a computer," says Beehler. "From a

corporate communications point of view, it had always been very difficult to reach these people – many of them don't have Canada Post e-mail addresses."

Implementing a Next-Generation Employee Directory

For assistance, Beehler and his team turned to Innovapost, Canada Post's IT Service Provider. Innovapost's Incubator team was already in the process of developing a next-generation employee directory that offered functionality similar to that found on popular social networking websites.

The application, named OneDegree™, allows users to create profile pages and groups, blog, send messages, view photos and collaborate with other employees via forums and whiteboards. OneDegree™ users can also write their own blogs and create groups around their particular job roles, hobbies or interests.

INNOVAPOST CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

OneDegree™ System Highlights

Current use

75,000 Canada Post employees

Benefits

- Communications can now be targeted to specific employees or groups
- Messages now reach all Canada Post employees, regardless of location or job role
- Employee collaboration has increased
- Staff are more engaged, connected and productive
- Canada Post is benefitting from a more open culture that is fostering innovation



“We had heard about work being done at Innovapost that sounded like it could have some potential at Canada Post,” Beehler recalls. “Innovapost showed us a prototype of OneDegree™ and we realized that it could really enhance Intrapost and help us accomplish our communication goals.”

In November, 2008, Canada Post began a pilot project that combined Innovapost’s OneDegree™ application with Intrapost. “We didn’t want users to have to sign on to two different systems so Innovapost worked with us to integrate their solution into our existing intranet operations,” says Beehler.

Beehler and his team worked with Rob Sibley and Catalin Placintescu, Senior Consultants with Innovapost’s Business Incubator group, who helped ensure that the integration was as seamless as possible. “We rebranded the OneDegree™ user interface to look like Intrapost and incorporated it into the Intrapost front page so that it would be the first thing seen by users when they log in,” explains Sibley.

"In the past, management could only communicate with groups of employees through e-mail or via bulletin board postings, which reached only a fraction of our staff... We realized that with OneDegree™, anyone with access to a computer at work or at home could login and easily receive only the messages that were appropriate for them."

Brian Beehler, Director of Social Media at Canada Post.

Innovapost also responded to Canada Post's specific communications needs by providing custom development work that added new features to OneDegree™ and enhanced existing functionality. "We leveraged their SAP authentication module and created a single sign-in mechanism that also allows content to be personalized for each user. This means that when a user signs into Intrapost, they will see any messages directed specifically to them right on their home page."

Improving Corporate Communication

As Canada Post rolled out its pilot project, it quickly recognized the communication benefits offered by OneDegree™. "In the past, management could only communicate with groups of employees through e-mail or via bulletin board postings, which reached only a fraction of our staff," Beehler explains. "We realized that with OneDegree™, anyone with access to a computer at work or at home could login and easily receive only the messages that were appropriate for them. Instead of having to print out a booklet and mail it to their home, we could get important information to them electronically."

With employee segments presented in OneDegree™, Canada Post found that it could communicate with particular employees based on their role, their branch or their physical location across the country. "A shop floor worker would see a different message than someone on the management team," Beehler notes. "We saw that this would really help the communications team deliver targeted, relevant content to the right people."

Canada Post also learned that valuable data could be obtained through the metrics and reporting tools found within OneDegree™. "OneDegree™ allows users to provide feedback on the messages they receive," explains Sibley. "Management can measure open rates to learn how many messages have been read, and they can attach a poll to a message asking the recipient whether they have understood the message and/or found it useful."

Engaging Employees

In addition to improving communications between management and employees, Canada Post set out to ensure that the new Intrapost system would provide employees with the means to connect and collaborate with one another – regardless of their physical location or work group.

“Employees were already having these sorts of conversations on public social media tools like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, so we saw a big advantage in bringing those conversations inside Canada Post. A system like OneDegree™ really has the potential to get people engaged and change the work culture for the better, and we’re already seeing evidence of that.”

Brian Beehler, Director of Social Media at Canada Post.

“In an organization of 76,000 people, it can often be difficult to know who to turn to for information,” Beehler notes. “We wanted Intrapost to bring all employees within reach of each other.”

OneDegree™ allows users to tag their attributes which facilitates workplace collaboration by helping employees find colleagues with similar interests. “We saw that this would allow us to improve productivity among employees and tap into skills and knowledge that our people have beyond their specific job description,” says Beehler. “This idea of engaging employees and providing them with the means to make beyond functional contributions was huge for us.”

Canada Post was also very interested in providing relevant geographic information to employees, such as carpooling. “OneDegree™ allows users to organize ride-sharing, so Canada Post’s Commuting Challenge Group was very interested in ensuring that this functionality would be included in the updated version of Intrapost.”

Technical Rollout

Throughout the pilot project, Canada Post and Innovapost staff collaborated on a daily basis to demonstrate that OneDegree™ could be successfully integrated into Intrapost. “Our teams were truly engaged

in joint development and implementation,” recalls Sibley. “The Canada Post technical team had to call our data and synchronize files from the Intrapost site with those on OneDegree™, so we all worked together to ensure that everything would function as planned.”

OneDegree™ is offered under a software as a service (SaaS) model, which meant that Canada Post did not need to invest in the upfront development costs or purchase hardware upfront development or hardware costs. “We liked the idea that Innovapost would handle updates and upgrades and that we would be able to receive them as soon as they were released,” says Beehler.

After a successful 90 day trial, Canada Post gathered user feedback and used that information to proceed with a full-scale implementation of OneDegree™. In November, 2009, a new Intrapost intranet service featuring OneDegree™ was rolled out to all 76,000 Canada Post employees.

Posting Results

“We started seeing an amazing uptake immediately after launch,” Beehler remarks. “Employees began creating groups, uploading photos and posting on whiteboards right away.”

INNOVAPOST CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

“Working with Innovapost’s Incubator team was a great experience... They were incredibly responsive in terms of getting OneDegree™ deployed and in making subsequent modifications. The turnaround time they displayed was phenomenal and they were such a professional group to work with.”

Brian Beehler, Director of Social Media at Canada Post.

Canada Post’s communication group has also taken advantage of the new application to deliver targeted messages to a widely-expanded user base. “In the past, we could probably only communicate directly with about 14,000 employees. Now, we can reach more than 76,000,” notes Beehler. “Best of all, OneDegree™ has allowed us to move from a ‘push’ style of communications to a ‘pull’ approach in which people are actively logging in to view messages that they know will be of interest to them.”

Most importantly, Canada Post finds that the corporate culture has also benefited as employees become more connected with one another. “Employees were already having these sorts of conversations on public social media tools like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, so we saw a big advantage in bringing those conversations inside Canada Post. A system like OneDegree™ really has the potential to get people engaged and change the work culture for the better, and we’re already seeing evidence of that.”

Moving Forward

As in all good partnerships, the successful integration of OneDegree™ has benefitted both Canada Post and Innovapost.

“Working with Canada Post allowed us to gather user feedback from a large and complex organization,” says Dave Randall, Director of the Innovapost Incubator team. “We were able to incorporate a number of new features into OneDegree™ that will be applicable to other large or distributed organizations that choose to run OneDegree™.”

Canada Post plans to continue working with Innovapost into the future to develop new features and functionality for Intrapost. “Working with Innovapost’s Incubator team was a great experience,” says Beehler. “They were incredibly responsive in terms of getting OneDegree™ deployed and in making subsequent modifications. The turnaround time they displayed was phenomenal and they were such a professional group to work with.”

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