

Homes & Communities Agency

Employee Portal

Background

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is a new housing and regeneration agency for England, established to create opportunities for people to live in affordable homes in well served and well designed places. The HCA brought together English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation along with several delivery teams from the Department for Communities and Local Government. The new agency also incorporates the HCA Academy, a body set up to increase skills and knowledge for housing and regeneration professionals across the country.



"It would be difficult to imagine a better supplier/customer relationship than that which has developed between Chapter26 and HCA ."

*David Wilson Applications Manager,
Homes and Communities Agency*

Business Requirements

As a result of these and other historical organizational changes, the agency's IT assets were isolated silos with few automated processes. The HCA Intranet is the key vehicle for embedding the concept of the 'Single Conversation' - the HCA's most important business process - within the new agency and for information sharing both of which are vital to policy, budgetary, and project-level decision making. Equally importantly, the new agency sits at the very center of the government's response to the downturn in the housing market and in playing a key role in developing new initiatives to maintain and build capacity in the industry. Against this backdrop, it is vital for the HCA to automate business processes and integrate isolated applications, to provide staff with a timely, effective service.

Previously, English Partnerships and The Housing Corporation had established intranets running on different platforms. Oracle WebCenter technology used by English Partnerships was chosen as the vehicle to deliver the flexibility and agility required by the new agency.

"We needed to retain the web-enablement of our ex-English Partnerships assets so we could continue to derive value from them while having the freedom to adopt or develop new applications as business requirements change," explained David Wilson, applications manager, HCA.

We also needed a corporate Web platform that could act as an integration hub and a single point of entry to all our data sources and business tools."

The HCA implemented a corporate portal built on Oracle WebCenter Suite (previously BEA AquaLogic User Interaction), which provides a unified point of access to agency data and resources while facilitating rapid introduction of new applications.

The Project Approach

Through years of experience Chapter26 has developed a number of 'best practice' approaches for Portal design and implementation. In addition to these 'best practices' Chapter26 has developed a proven methodology for portal deployment (CPM). CPM ensures that all the necessary steps, checks and balances are used in order to ensure rapid and successful portal implementation. To accommodate HCA's style a 'RAD' approach was adopted. The project was successfully delivered within 56 days.

The Solution Overview

The HCA uses Oracle WebCenter Suite, including Oracle WebCenter Interaction (previously BEA AquaLogic Interaction) and Oracle WebCenter Collaboration (previously BEA AquaLogic Collaboration). The portal foundation, Oracle WebCenter Interaction, provides Web integration and interface services for all enterprise solutions. Oracle WebCenter Collaboration allows 1,000 HCA employees to work together online with tools such as project workspaces, task management, a universal calendar, an internal staff directory, and document management.

A dashboard within the portal is connected to the HCA data warehouse, and this provides users with an 'end of the previous working day' portal view of project scheduling and expenditure. This allows the 1,000 staff to ensure housing programs and other initiatives adhere to their fiscal and timing objectives.

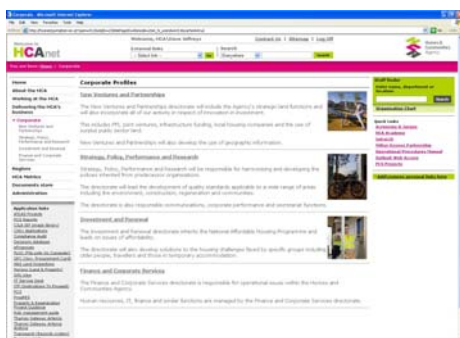
HCA Employee Portal



The multi-faceted portal leans toward engaging, conversational-style communications, with the home page providing news and information about the agency and its parent organization, the Department for Communities and Local Government,, as well as regular updates from the HCA chairman and chief executive. Regular updates about what is happening in the business appear almost daily.

The heart of the portal is organized around employee information communities that use portlets to pull together data and resources for groups of employees with common requirements. Wilson and his team have given each of the regions a common template to help develop a consistent look and feel to the site; while users also have the ability to launch applications directly from the portal.

Among these applications is an interactive map of England that allows users to access detailed local information on cities and regions. The map uses information from the Intranet Land Information System (IntraLIS), an Autodesk MapGuide GIS application providing accurate, and timely, geographic and land-use information. The Project Finder portlet gives users detailed information about every project managed by the HCA, and an Asset Database portlet provides information about all the land owned by the agency.



Summary

"The Oracle portal continues to transform the way we work," Wilson said. "Building on the early successes with integration of the Geographical Information system and the Data Warehouse, the HCA is now focused on using the intranet as the primary vehicle for internal communications."

He added, "The fact that we completed the roll-out in 56 days is testimony to the close working relationship with our implementation partner Chapter26, although the past two years have shown us that such productivity enhancements are the norm with Oracle WebCenter Suite. For instance, the portlets that we create to deliver application functionality are extremely easy to use, allowing us to roll out new functionality without any employee training. Often, new applications, such as our system for Company Secretariat and our Executive Dashboard, are delivered via the portal. There's no software to install and no upgrade headaches."

In my experience over 25 years as a consumer of IT services this combination of supplier attributes is rare. Harnessing those attributes generates the potential for amazing results. We are beginning to get those amazing results and in due course will transform the way we share information within the Homes and Communities Agency.

David Wilson Homes and Communities Agency