Building Websites that Work:
SharePoint Drives Sales Effort for ARRIS

For ARRIS Group, Inc. (ARRIS), transforming how service providers deliver entertainment and communications is all in a day's work. What the company couldn't do so easily was manage and update the static, internal website its sales team relied upon for information.

When ARRIS decided to leverage its SharePoint platform to build a new, data-driven site for the team and brought Abel Solutions on board for the effort, the outcome surpassed everyone's expectations. "Abel Solutions was 100% able to meet our needs," says ARRIS Senior Director of Marketing Connie Walters. "The response from the sales team has been overwhelmingly positive."

Challenge

The existing sales website, which ARRIS designed specifically to feed the sales team product and pricing information, served up data from static documents the company had stored in site folders. Built in standard web tools, the site wasn't dynamically linked to a functional product database, making updates cumbersome— and leaving users unable to determine whether site information was current.

ARRIS wanted to develop a more effective, useful site for its sales team–one with a highly structured search and retrieval system. Management knew that SharePoint was well-suited to meet the site's data archival, search and retrieval needs. However, it was concerned that the breadth of options and functions common with SharePoint sites would prove distracting to the team.

Solution

The ARRIS IT department had worked with Abel Solutions on its successful, initial migration from SharePoint 2007 to 2010. When the ARRIS Marketing project team began interviewing vendors for their effort, Abel Solutions was on the list. After the interview, the internal IT department recommended Abel Solutions. The company's expertise and methodology, paired with its familiarity with the company, made Abel Solutions the perfect choice.

"We needed a company with strong SharePoint expertise and sufficient resources to get us up and running with a quick turnaround," says Walters. "Abel's approach–where each project is a partnership–appealed to us, as well." After evaluating ARRIS' requirements and objectives for the sales site and working with stakeholders to refine the vision, Abel Solutions developed a custom front end for the SharePoint site–a purpose-built interface that would ensure the sales team found product and price information, quickly. The site's navigation menu gives personnel access to key links–What's New, Solutions, Products, Marketing and Events–and the site highlights

introductory product presentations to help sales personnel connect with their prospects and customers.

On the back-end, the site's database includes product presentations, updates, market research, images, white papers, webinars and more. The site uses Microsoft FAST Search technology to provide highly accurate results, with custom options that refine the search when sales personnel need detailed information. Accurate, consistent tagging ensures that information added to the site appears in search results dynamically as soon as it is added.

"One of our requirements was that the site would look like a website, rather than a typical SharePoint site, because we wanted to lock down how a salesperson could navigate," says Walters. "With the interface that Abel Solutions created for us, team members get product information in a structured fashion instead of seeing a folder that says 'Here are product ABC docs.' We provide them with the information they need to do their jobs more effectively."

Results

According to Walters, the sales team is extremely pleased with the new site and reports that information is much easier to find and more up to date. "Of the 20 represen-tatives we proactively surveyed, all are using the site at least weekly–if not daily–to get information to help with their sales process," says Walters.

"Our content contributors have an easier way to publish information, which means the site stays more up to date," Walters continues. "The whole system is easier to manage and easier to search, and users feel the search results are more reliable."

Additionally, the marketing department's overhead to manage the system is much lower, Walters reports. "We made it clear we wanted a system we could manage going forward, and Abel Solutions gave us that," she notes. "They understand the expertise we have in-house, and they tell us whether we have the competency to do something. If we have questions or don't have the expertise for a particular activity, we call on Abel Solutions to help us."

ARRIS' "next big step" is incorporating all of the products from its Motorola Home acquisition into the site, integrating it with salesforce.com, and making the information more available for mobile and tablet users. Walters and Abel Solutions are already looking ahead, evaluating projects Abel Solutions has done for other clients that might be relevant for these next steps.

"Abel Solutions operates as a partner, and they are great communicators," Walters concludes. "I highly recommend them and have recommended them internally for other projects. We have expanded our use of Abel Solutions for additional products in Marketing, as well. I see them as an extension of our team, providing us with the resources to exploit SharePoint to meet our business needs."