

Case study

IT Portfolio Management at Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zurich

About ETH Zurich

Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) Zurich is one of the world's leading technology and natural sciences universities. It is renowned for its excellent teaching, pioneering research and the direct transfer of new findings into practice. Founded in 1855, it offers an inspiring environment for researchers and a comprehensive education for its students today. ETH Zurich has approximately 18,500 students from more than 110 countries, including 4,000 doctoral students. In international rankings, ETH Zurich is regularly rated as one of the best universities in the world. Twenty-one Nobel prize winners have studied, taught, or conducted research at ETH Zurich, underlining the university's excellent reputation.

The Challenge: Starting Point, Requirements, and Objectives

Central IT Services at ETH Zurich was expansive in technical respects and qualitatively advanced in terms of service delivery with a state of the art infrastructure. However, it lacked transparency regarding ongoing projects and their associated costs. Management experienced challenges answering questions like: "What are IT resources working on?" or "How exactly are we spending our money and on which investments?" Because ETH Zurich continues to grow and the use of resources is supposed to simultaneously remain constant, overall efficiency had to be increased.

"Transparency is generally not one of the strengths of IT," said Dordaneh Arangeh, Department head of ID IT Procurement & Portfolio, ETH Zurich. "If portfolio management works in IT, then it works everywhere."

Overview

Customer

Central IT Services of ETH Zurich

Industry

Public Sector: Training and Research Institution

Geography

Switzerland

ETH Zurich's IT services is using Planview Enterprise to obtain an overview of all projects and services and the resources they use. The objective is to achieve greater transparency in IT service provision, accurate reporting, and better predictability.

“We are now able to verify project costs much better than before so we can calculate the actual costs for each job or task.”

– Dordaneh Arangeh, Department Head of ID IT Procurement & Portfolio, ETH Zurich

The Solution: Effective Resource Planning and Sophisticated, Multifaceted Reporting

ETH Zurich compared several providers as part of their evaluation procedure in search of a solution. The institution chose Planview Enterprise because it best met the required criteria and offered cost-benefit value, effective resource planning, and sophisticated reporting capabilities. “Planview Enterprise is very robust when it comes to cross-project resource planning and the reporting also showed the flexibility of design options,” says Arangeh.

Planview Enterprise was intended for IT services and not any other infrastructure divisions of ETH. As a result, the effort required to foster the necessary acceptance by IT services staff was greater. After the decision was made at the end of 2012, the first configuration workshop was launched jointly with Planview in 2013. In July 2013, the system went into production, but was not fully operational. Training for users took place in September and October 2013, and on January 1st, 2014 Planview Enterprise was operational. From this point forward, all staff had to use Planview Enterprise for time reporting. Since the beginning of 2015, ETH Zurich has been using a newer version of Planview Enterprise and its new features.

Thoroughly Educate and Record all Company Data

The comprehensive implementation process was assisted by a multi-layered educational program. The objective of this was to clarify the benefits of an IT portfolio management solution and to overcome the psychological hurdle or fear of “too much transparency” among staff. To achieve sufficient acceptance by at least 80 percent of staff, all possible methods were used – from presentations to one-to-one discussions at all levels. Arangeh says that

without this expenditure on “change management” it would not have worked.

Project Management Without Resource Management is Ineffective

Capturing all data is crucial to the success of a new solution – including the resources and capacity. With projects, it is often overlooked that, for example, one staff member is 170 percent overloaded, because every project manager wants something from him. “Project portfolio management without resource management is ineffective. That is precisely why it is so important for all of the data to be available in one tool, says Arangeh.” It was possible to achieve the greatest added value in the areas of the Project Management Office, Reporting and Planning.

The Benefits: More Transparent and More Predictable

Two hundred and fifty IT service users at ETH Zurich are now using the project, resource management, and reporting modules in Planview Enterprise enabling them to plan more efficiently.

Since using Planview Enterprise ETH Zurich has realized the following benefits:

- Transparent view of project activities and project status
- Tasks can be distributed systematically
- Improved reporting for improved decision making

“We are now able to verify project costs much better than before so we can calculate the actual cost for each job or task,” says Arangeh.