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Wai-Kit Lau,  
Business Analyst  
**A.T. Kearney**

#### **The Business Environment**

With gross fees of over \$1.2 billion and 4,700 employees in more than 60 offices around the world, A.T. Kearney is one of the most successful global management-consulting firms in the world today. To remain competitive, A.T. Kearney is finding new and better ways for clients and project teams to collaborate across organizational and geographic boundaries. One initiative is to expedite projects by creating a Web-based repository of information about an engagement.

#### **The Challenge**

The first project for eRoom at A.T. Kearney was a change initiative, undertaken at every level of a large financial services firm, with the intent of making the entire organization more responsive to customers.

The biggest challenges facing the A.T. Kearney teams in this financial services engagement were geographical dispersement and version control. Keeping the various team members up to speed on the latest version of hundreds of documents was an exercise in agility; especially considering that team members would spend a half-day at the client site, then turn around and work the rest of the day at A.T. Kearney's office in Manhattan.

David Ritchie, the Internet Technology Supervisor for KnowledgeNet, began to explore new directions in collaborative software. His objective: to find new ways for widespread teams to come together rapidly on the Web. The solution had to be flexible, rapidly-deployable, and highly productive, practically right out of the box.

"We were a very large Lotus Notes user, and we still have a significant installed base of Lotus Notes. As a result, we have all these servers that are a chore to support. We want our department to run leaner and meaner. So we looked for project collaboration tools that we could use through a browser."

"We looked at several different products that provided similar functionality. We really wanted a turnkey solution, something that we could buy today and have in operation tomorrow." Most of the solutions that Ritchie evaluated required varying degrees of development before they could be productive. "Plus the features of most programs overlapped with our current capabilities. We were looking for powerful collaborative software for fast-cycle projects, that could be integrated with our current platforms."

#### **The Solution: eRoom**

After looking at several products with similar functionality, David Ritchie selected eRoom Technology's eRoom. eRoom is designed to help members of collaborative teams coordinate entire portfolios of projects. A "fast-cycle solution" in that it is quickly deployed and quickly productive, eRoom enables companies like A.T. Kearney to deploy client engagement teams rapidly. It also integrates with existing environments quickly.

eRoom works like a virtual meeting room that's always open: at any time, users can log on to share ideas, contribute to discussions, and get updates to projects. Everything they need to know about a project can be found in one place: the eRoom.

With eRoom, consultants can log onto the Web at the client site, and work the rest of the day in the eRoom assigned to their team. Not only does this save travel time, but since eRoom immediately and automatically notifies members of any changes to documents, it helps the A.T. Kearney team reduce mistakes and wasted time hunting latest versions.

#### **The Benefits**

##### **Ease of Use and Superior Collaboration**

"The majority of the features that we were looking for are already there in eRoom," states Ritchie. "There is no development required, we don't have to spend any money up front getting this thing up and running. It works right out of the box."

From a user point of view, what distinguishes eRoom is its exceptional ease of use and flexibility. Opening an eRoom is simple, and anyone with a browser can use it immediately. eRoom is managed by team members themselves, who add and delete members according to the demands of their projects.

"One of the nice things about eRoom is its design," says Ritchie. "Most of our consulting workforce works remotely, either dial in to our network, or co-located at a customer site. eRoom really is efficient for those people who have to dial in because so much of the information is stored and referenced locally - they don't have to wait for mailboxes to synchronize or for screens to come up. eRoom is very conducive to the remote or off-site worker."

Ritchie continues: "Communication is always the bottleneck in a client engagement. No matter what client you're working with, no matter what the project goals are, it's always hard to keep people up-to-date about the latest developments. What we have found is that when clients are collaborating using eRoom, the communication is greatly improved. All of the information is out there, the client doesn't have to wait for someone to send an e-mail or document; they can always see the work in progress and work on it themselves. That's how we're using eRoom to further our philosophy at A.T. Kearney. "

### **Search Capability and Flexibility Key Features**

Business Analyst Wai-Kit Lau became one of two "point persons" at the financial services engagement. In charge of eRoom administration, he cites its remarkable flexibility and ease of use as a major success factor in the engagement. "First let me say that I am not experienced in system administration. But unlike other project management programs, eRoom could not have been easier to use, allowing me to add and delete members at will."

Lau also was impressed with the Search capabilities eRoom offered. He states, "We have so many documents in this engagement, just managing them all is a major challenge, let alone finding what you need there. eRoom allows you to search the entire eRoom - or across eRooms, if you're allowed access - by category, phrase, or even word. It makes the entire process so much easier."

Part of that ease of use entails being able to set up the eRoom according to the team's preferences. The data structure is exceptionally flexible, which helps in an engagement where some teams may want to organize by process - milestones, for example - and others by content - three essential documents, for example.

### **Leaner Administration, Greater Access**

One mission of A.T. Kearney's KnowledgeNet group is to leverage information to accomplish more work. eRoom's user-administration frees the KnowledgeNet Staff from less value-added chores, and enables broader access to information.

Ritchie adds, "It shouldn't take more people to manage IT investments, it should take less. Our goal is to run leaner and meaner, in a highly leveraged IT environment. eRoom helps us accomplish that. "

Wai-Kit Lau agrees. "In the time we've been using eRoom, to keep people in the loop and documents up-to-date, we've saved between five and seven hours per consultant, per week. Lau also cites faster development time due to the ability to manage documents more easily.

KnowledgeNet manages the eRoom infrastructure now, and turns day to day management of the system - user I.D.s and configuration details - over to the project teams. IT Managers retain control of installation and infrastructure.