

Collaborative Supply Chain Case Study: Working Smarter at The College Bowl



It's all in the way we listen.

The Problem...

For the past 35 years, College Bowl has been the single source for academic competitions worldwide, providing content and organization to teams of students competing on topics ranging from history and current events to science and mathematics. Starting with a single competition during the early days of American television, there is now a College Bowl, High School Bowl, the Honda Campus All-Star Challenge for the students of America's Historically Black Colleges, and the University Challenge, where the 'College Bowl' programme appears in the United Kingdom on BBC2. Over the years, the California-based company has received numerous awards for its contributions to education including an Emmy, a Peabody, a Congressional Citation, and several Presidential Citations.

Here is a case study about the market leader and how they moved their product and their business process to the next level. It is a story about leaving the old world of paper and index cards and embracing the new world of electronic collaboration. It is about discovering a new way for authors, editors, reviewers, and organizers to work together to make the content as strong and accurate as possible. It is a story of automating the workflow process that enabled College Bowl to plan, build, and organize its content in a whole new way. Here is their story...

The Situation...

College Bowl Company, Inc. has a small, focused team that authors, organizes, edits, and approves the content for all of the College Bowl competitions, as well as plan and run the actual events. For the first twenty-plus years, the questions were authored by hand, copied by hand, and manually edited. Even though they had taken their first step toward modern technology in 1994 with the introduction of a word processor template to automate the generation of the questions, the rest of the

process remained the same. The questions were still printed out, copied numerous times, manually edited and organized, and logged by hand in basic databases. Maintaining content balance and reduction of content duplication was all manual. Tens of thousands of dollars were spent on

"This is the first time in the history of The College Bowl that no contesting took place."

...Mary Oberembt
The College Bowl

The Solution...

PSC was engaged to design and implement a new infrastructure and architecture for dealing with the creation and management of College Bowl content. Lotus Domino was chosen as the platform on which to build the College Bowl workflow and distribution functionality, which would be accessed by the majority of the users with a Notes Client. PSC's enTouch.workflow frameworks were chosen as the tool to make this happen.

Since the centerpiece of the College Bowl content is the *question*, the first step was to create the Question Creation application. The question authors begin the process by creating questions, selecting categories, adding question type (Toss-Up or Bonus), designating program selection (such as College Bowl, HCASC, and High School Bowl), and providing content and source information. Once a question is authored, it is put into a workflow phase, allowing for review, editing, and approval. Comments can be made about a question, such as "is the

topic to vague or is it current?" The question is returned to the author for additional edits and transferred to the administrator for final approval.

Once the question completes the authoring process, it moves into one of the program databases. There is a program database for each College Bowl program with different game sets, or levels. For instance, College Bowl has Campus Program (CP), Regionals (REG), and Nationals (NCT). In each program database, a game booker takes 53 questions and organizes them into a packet. Each level has a different number of required packets. Once questions are added to a packet, they are placed in a prescribed order. Packets are verified for content and the correct number of toss-ups and bonuses. Packets then go through a review process, with internal and outside reviewers proposing packet and question level information, such as question and content balance, and appropriateness. At the end of the process, a totals document, which gives the total number of questions per category, is generated to insure content balance.

Once a game set is verified as complete, three documents are generated — a packet, content totals, and alpha log. The packet document includes the 53 questions in the correct format for printing, including the question key and all of the packet information (No Labels!). PSC created a rich text connector to pass data from Notes to Microsoft Word, while keeping all formatting. The packets are generated in Word and then saved as PDFs -- in under 5 minutes. The PDFs are sent to the printer for regional and national competitions or the school for local competitions. The content totals lists the number of questions per content category per packer allowing



greater content auditing and tracking. An alpha log document is also generated, listing all of the answers for a packet. This is used for tracking of answers on a year-to-year and level-to-level basis.

The application also allows for questions to be imported from one program to another. The High School Bowl Program uses questions from College Bowl and HCASC for the following year. These questions can be imported at a program year and content level, and then can be edited for the younger competitors if needed. Other new features never before available include full text searching for instant queries of names or content, and spell check, which keeps the numerous assortment of names and places accurate and up-to-date.

This system was designed to be easily modified, very flexible, and very collaborative. To facilitate the authoring creation and review process, PSC added the presence and IM features from IBM Lotus Sametime to the enTouch.workflow process. Any time there is a question or input is required from any participant, their availability is immediately known and a

click-to-chat can be executed via Sametime. Other participants in the discussion can be added at any time, again, via Sametime.

Given the thousands of authoring sessions, the time savings attributed to Sametime is very significant.

As the project proceeded, it was determined that the content category levels were too vague. The correction, which was to increase the number of categories from 14 to 140, was made without any changes to the application other than the new keywords.

The new content categories now allow the building of a pre-booking process, which will automatically book packets from the pool of available questions. For each level in each program, the number of questions per major or minor content category can be set. The Game Booker then will only have to review and make changes where they see fit. This will save many hours.

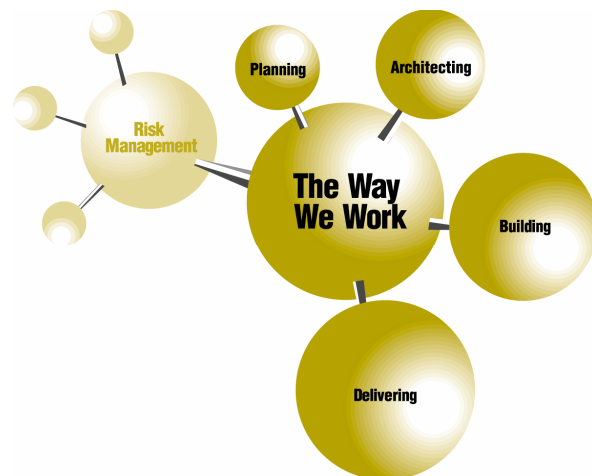
A web user interface is being built to allow Outside Reviewers to provide their input without requiring any special software.

The Bottom Line...

For the first time since the founding of College Bowl, their business process is completely electronic. Gone are the time and cost of manually generating questions and organizing them. Gone is the time previously spent on busy work and error correction. Because of the new searching and review process, the duplicate and miniscule detailed questions were easily weeded out!

The initial cost justification of \$75,000 has already been returned. And this is just the tip of the iceberg. From this point forward, time will now be spent on creating better questions and games. This, in turn, will allow College Bowl to grow each program and do more programs.

College Bowl will never be the same. Although the time-honored look-and-feel remains the same, the backend will be forever different. And why not? The College Bowl Nationals for 2002 went off without a hitch and for the very first time, none of the content was contested. The College Bowl attributes the content tools of the PSC application, both directly and indirectly, to the newfound success



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