

Viewpoint Visual Project Management Generates 40% rise in Productivity for a Texas Utility

The Trinity River Authority (TRA) was struggling to deliver a hectic schedule of capital improvement projects worth over one billion dollars.

As a subdivision of the State of Texas, TRA is responsible for conservation, waste water and reclamation for 60 municipalities within the 18,000 square-mile Trinity River Basin.

They also manage recreational and reservoir facilities for the area, the master plan for long term water resources development, and a range of federal grants.

Because of increasing demand, regulations, and complexity, the volume of work they had to complete had quickly grown exponentially.

And it was this increased work load that was causing significant problems.

Why TRA Looked for a New Solution

Like many organizations that go through rapid periods of growth, the project delivery team at TRA was starting crack under the pressure of managing many complex projects.

While the quality of work was never sacrificed, they lacked the resources and systems needed to also ensure their projects were always delivered on time and on budget.

According to Duke Poritt, Pinnacle Strategies' project manager for the TRA assignment, leadership at TRA knew their system was falling short.

"They were having some concerns about how they executed their projects," he said.

TRA had already revamped many of its project management processes across the entire organization, but they were still falling short in dealing with difficulties such as:

- The large volume of simultaneous projects with high levels of complexity.
- Project requirements frequently changing during execution creating substantial slowdowns.
- And increased (excessive?) use of resources on most projects.

For the leadership team, there was little true insight into

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the organization's project execution process or schedule risk. They were often unpleasantly surprised with last minute expenses and schedule delays.

It had become very difficult to accurately forecast how they'd deliver new projects, and the time forecast for completing new projects often fell far short of customer needs.

At the root of it was a lack of effective communication and collaboration between departments. This really had the organization hamstrung. The project delivery process had degenerated into constant exercises of blame assignment and finger pointing.

When the team members were asked what they believed was the biggest hurdle preventing projects from being delivered on time, TRA Planning and Development Engineer Marco Ramirez perfectly explained the feeling amongst his colleagues by saying, "Everybody was in their own kind of world . . . and it wasn't until something came up, that everybody started pointing the finger."

Because of this, projects were always experiencing delays and running behind schedule, because nobody really knew what needed to be done, and which department was responsible.

Deadlines were always looming, and lead times on completing new projects often fell short.

Everyone was feeling the strain.

They had to find a way to streamline their processes, and get work flows back under control.

They needed a system that would allow them to manage their projects efficiently, instead of being drowned by too much happening too quickly.

The senior leadership of TRA's Northern Region Planning and Development Group knew things had to change and she took the bull by the horns to make it happen.



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The ViewPoint Solution

The secret to getting TRA back on track was to generate a clear set of processes.

To do this meant creating a visual representation of their project delivery work flow that managers, team members, and stake holders could refer to, and see exactly what was needed to move their projects along efficiently.

It was obvious that the ViewPoint Visual Project Management system was the perfect solution to TRA's issues.

ViewPoint improves situational awareness and promotes collaboration by using Visual Project, and Portfolio Boards (VPBs), to make all projects in the portfolio visible.

This allows for early intervention and strategic management of the bottlenecks that block a project's progress.

The system is a cohesive, scalable process that rapidly increases productivity, and when combined with VISUM visual project management software, it automatically

and actively monitors each project's work flow, which would allow the entire TRA team to be kept up-to-date.

Simplifying the Project Delivery Process

They took an evolutionary approach, building on what they were already doing, with a small group of team members in a pilot program. TRA's pipeline division was a test case. From there,

the transformation was rolled out department by department, to finally include the entire planning and delivery process.

With common goals and metrics across all the teams,

TRA's leadership could align their strategic goals across all levels of the organization.

According to Duke, it was the integration of the teams using the ViewPoint system which had the most profound impact on the TRA managers and team members.

"We created a master board, and that board drove the priorities on all the lower, more subordinate boards," he explains. "The activity on the lower boards fed back to the master board, which created a closed loop planning and execution system. Nothing was lost."

These boards allowed everything to be synchronized and streamlined, not only for the projects, but throughout the entire organization.

Everyone involved could see the ViewPoint system was having a profound impact.

"The effect of creating the boards was almost instantaneous; we had people for the first time understanding and having a similar process," Duke said.

Quantifiable Results

Within 3 weeks, the pipeline team was seeing dramatic increases in effective communication and collaboration. By the end of the ninth week, project velocity shot up by more than 30%, and after 18 weeks it reached a staggering 40% improvement.

But it was the plant division where the biggest increases in productivity were recorded.

"We saw an increase of almost 60% in the velocity in the elements that we were executing in the project," Duke

"It is by far the best thing I've encountered in my seven years here in terms of being able to track, not only individual parts within a project, but also those at the macro scale."

said. *"That velocity; the rate of task completions, was done with the same team that had been struggling to deliver anything on time."*

"It was a rapid increase, caused by getting the right people together at the right time, and showing them how to address the issues they had to increase that velocity."



And because of better communication between staff, an added benefit was that meeting times were drastically reduced, while still getting far more done and seeing far greater results.

Howard Slobodin said increased awareness in the organization had cut his meeting times down from an hour and a half, to rarely more than half an hour per week.

When asked how he would sum up the changes the ViewPoint Visual Management system had brought to his organization, he paused thoughtfully before saying, *"It's been a tremendous gift of efficiency."*

"It is by far the best thing I've encountered in my seven years here in terms of being able to track, not only individual parts within a project, but also those at the macro scale."

And his team members are equally grateful for the changes the ViewPoint system has brought to TRA.

Marco Ramirez says the entire working environment at TRA has improved dramatically.

"I use to dread coming to work," he explains.

"But now I love coming because I can see that we are all working towards the same goal."