



Research Article

**FROM CHAOS TO CONCERT: EVOLUTION OF A DIGITAL COLLABORATION
TOOL FROM A TO-DO LIST**

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ABSTRACT

Shuchita Prakashan (P) Ltd., an India-based publishing company, started, as any usual small startup, with simple tools like, to-do lists to combat, and, gradually moved to some intentional processes, this time, to pour-in some effectiveness, with growing operations, and then, an organizing tool to streamline the flow of work.

This case explores the passage made by the company in creation of something new, given the old and familiar. This is a story of mustering efficiency with all art and some science, to turn administration into inspiration. Management devised a collaborative platform fit to be wed to information systems. Theirs is a case of putting a trim tab on the fleet.

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INTRODUCTION

About the Company

Shuchita Prakashan Private Limited (SPPL), a reputed name among CA, CS & ICWA aspirants across India, started its journey with a very small assets and infrastructure in 1991 as M/S Shuchita Prakashan. On January 14, 1993 it was incorporated to its present name as “Shuchita Prakashan Private Limited”. The business started with a cyclostyle machine where unsolved question papers along with answers were handwritten and cyclostyled to make available to students for the preparation of CA examination. The company was getting ready to create a landmark in the field of CA, CS and ICWA preparation with its brand name “Scanner”. It started publishing its systematic inherent books “Scanner”, which included unsolved questions, arranged chapter wise with net answers of various professional examinations specially CA, CS & ICWA. After establishing itself with “Scanner”, the company started publishing text books on different subjects related to these professional examinations. The Company created a milestone when it decided to provide books at the lowest price rate to the students and it started a new publication edition “Green Edition” for all inherent books of the company.

Today, SPPL is an ISO 9001:2008 certified, fully computerized and ERP implemented company. The company is registered with Small Scale Industries, Govt. of India and is a member of Eastern U.P. Chamber of Commerce and Industry. With its commitments to provide effective study material to students preparing for the professional examinations, it continued with innovations in this directions which gave the business a growth of 250 times between the year 1992 to 2014. In successfully providing the published material it has been able to increase its market from mere few students of Allahabad in 1993 to lac of students across India. It also increased its published material from only few question papers of CA examinations to different kinds of help and study material for different professional examinations with regular edition and green edition both.

In the journey of its evolving business processes, SPPL has seen interesting changes from time to time. One of such innovative changes was - development of “Monthly Diary”, a physical organizing tool for all of its employees. This organizing tool was initiated as manual monthly diary for each employee in the organization. Presently, the manual diary has been replaced with an in-house developed digital collaborative tool. This case study is intending to understand the growth and development process of the organization with special interest on its “Digital Collaborative Tool”. This is a kind of new business practice which has the potential to increase both the efficiency and effectiveness of any business organization.

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Growth and Evolution of Systems

SPPL had no departments in the initial stage of its business. It started as a single unit with each member contributing according to their potential and capability to various tasks of the business. It was easy to manage the things. With the development of business, few functional departments evolved that worked with physical collaboration with each other. After few years, the departments in SPPL were systemized. The basis of developing departments in SPPL is a wonderful experience. With the increasing complexity in business processes, the organization followed a system approach in deciding its sub tasks, tasks and group of tasks. This means, realizing the organization in its totality so that all the resources of the organization can be organized to achieve the objective in the most efficient way.

The functional departments are the collection of some related processes. Each process further may have sub processes. Sub-processes in the SPPL are called segments. Segments are important part of ‘To-do list’. ‘To-do list’ is a well-organized and well-defined collection of tasks and procedures. Processes or sub processes are the systems itself which means each process has some defined inputs and standard operating procedure on the inputs and then the result (output) of each process. This makes the various processes in each department tied together with the input/output relations. The processes are developed and organized in such a way that output of one process is used as input in the next process and so on. Presently, there are total nine departments in SPPL namely, Production, Marketing, Human Resource, Store, Information Technology, Administration, Quality Control, Finance and Customer Relationship Management. Each department has a DM (Department Manager) and it is divided into number of processes with its own input-action-output. Each process within the department has a Process Owner who is responsible for all input-action-output of the process. Each process may have sub processes (segments). All these relations are described in well-developed and documented work-sheet for each department. Thus business in SPPL runs smoothly and efficiently. This is all because of its innovativework environment and following of systems approach.

Development of Physical Organizing Tool (Monthly Diary) and Its Components: Challenges of Change Management

Employees used to help each other in completion of tasks. There was no problem; business was growing gradually. But few things in the work environment were continuously drawing the attention of management. Some people missed some of their important tasks while helping others in completing their tasks. Sometimes an employee could not prioritize the task that was important from the organizations’ business point of view. Sometimes it was felt that some mistake or incompleteness has led cascading effects. In year 2000, SPPL started structuring the daily task details of each employee in the organization so as everyone can remember and prioritize its own tasks by keeping organizational interest at top. This led to the development of ‘Manual Monthly Diary’, inspired by the habit 3 “Put First Things First” by Stephen R. Covey (p. 145). It proved to be one of the most innovative practices in the business. It has all necessary components that are required in planning, executing and monitoring the individual tasks on daily, weekly and monthly basis. This manual monthly diary comprises of 72 pages. Page

1 contains three items: first, diary details like name of the diary holder, month and year, second, monthly goals and third master task list. Page 2 contains an index for notes section of day pages. Page 35 contains dates of next month. Page 36 and 37 combines into one to make up center spreadsheet. Page 38 is allotted for subsequent months. Page 71 and 72 are allotted to weekly compass. Rest of the pages, combining two in one, are day pages comprising of a small calendar, log of daily activities, Appointment of the day, prioritized daily task list, notes and review today and plan tomorrow.

The important components of monthly diary, on the basis of time scale, can be divided in five major parts namely: vision component, Monthly component, weekly component, daily component and search component, as listed below:

Vision Component

Master Task List (Personal and Business): Important tasks - official and personal are listed through this part of the diary.

Master Task List	
Personal	Business

Figure 1 Master Task List

Monthly Component

Name:-	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Monthly Goals</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Monthly Goals															
Monthly Goals																	
Month:-																	
Year:-																	

Figure 2 Monthly Goals

Monthly Goals: This component of the diary gives an opportunity to list the monthly goals by the diary user.

Next Month: This is a planning component that provides the space for planning an activity on any day in next month. The record is listed date wise and day wise.

Next Month						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date

Figure 3 Next Month

information about the requirements of physical organizing tool and various processes in different departments. The development team had already been informed about the challenges faced with the use of physical diary. The design of the software specially targeted towards inclusion of needs of collaboration, coordination and information sharing among processes such that the routine as well as planned tasks are not missed and have been allotted required resources in the most efficient way. It has a Log-in panel by which all employees enter into the system. This is to ensure the security of the system. The software has been developed by keeping in mind the requirement of each employee and each process differently. Thus an employee has the permission to access only those parts of system and specific information that are needed by his/her ownwork. The manager of the department has authority to grant access rights.

The digital collaborative tool is designed to include all the components of the physical diary. The Menu items and the Reports on the main page of the digital are mentioned below:

Menu

Master Task List: Includes daily task lists and Special Task list (assigned by some superior)

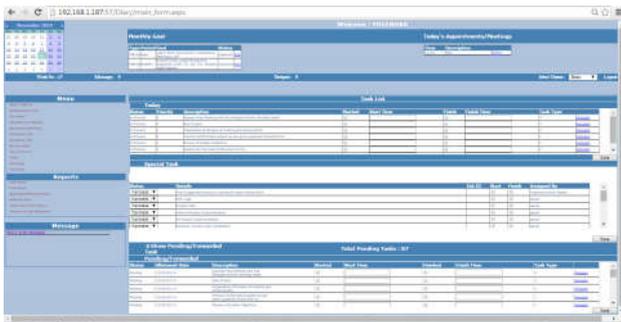


Figure 10 The Digital Collaborative Tool

1. Messages/New Tasks: This component provides the facility to send messages, assign tasks to others and plan task for self.
2. Day Notes: Noting the important point on the day which need to be remembered.
3. Schedule You Meeting: Meetings with other members of the department or organization can be scheduled.
4. Appointments/Meeting: Appointments and meetings can be seen in this panel.
5. Completed Tasks: The list of completed tasks.
6. Delegated Tasks: The list of delegated tasks.
7. Review Today: At the end of the day one can review all tasks of the day.
8. Plan Tomorrow: After reviewing the today’s task, one can plan to tomorrow and assign priorities to them.
9. Goals: Listing monthly goals.
10. Feed Back: Recording feedback.
 1. Report
 2. Task Report
 3. Goal Report
 4. Appointment /Meeting Report
 5. Authority Chart
 6. Master Work Chart Report
 7. Temporary Task Delegation



Figure 11 Menu and Report

Value Addition in the Process of Design & Development

The process of design and development of the software was itself an example of excellent collaborative effort. The development was a kind of evolution rather than a software development activity. This helped the processes to better understand each other’s problem and ways to overcome them. The employees had some problems while using physical tool so they find a way to solve those problems with the development of new collaborative tool. The collaborative effort helped some of the employees to learn the system more easily as they were involved in the conceptual development and design of the tools in the software.

Change Management

The company developed a training program with which the existing and new employees are trained. The new comers have to get trained in the system as every employee in the SPPL is allotted with its user Id and Password in the collaborative tool. One has to mark one’s attendance for the day by logging in the system, and the last log off of the day is taken as time of exit from the office by the employee. Thus the system is compulsory for all the employees.

Apart from the training and compulsory nature of its use, the software has the facility by which the seniors in the organization get the compliance status of every employee in the department. The transparency in the work and tools, with the use of this software, has made the process of change very easy.

Usage and Efficiency Gained

SPPL is a company which is known for its efficiency in providing quality products. The resources of SPPL are used in most efficient way and processes are in close coordination to each other. The credit for such a working environment can be given to its digital collaborative tool. The company has full utilization of its digital system. Each employee is connected with other through the system. Each and every detail and information is digitally available. This has powered the decision making process at each level. Each department, each process has all necessary information on its computer. Every action at one place by an individual employee is visible through the digital tool to every other person who is supposed to know it. The input –action- output relation among processes in SPPL is well organized with the use of this system. This results in optimum utilization and systematic sharing of each of the available resources in the SPPL. Because of its systematic and digital working environment the business of SPPL is continuously growing and now the organization is heading towards expanding its business in other areas like, retail marketing.

CONCLUSION

Shuchita Prakashan (P) Ltd., spread in three coordinates, has implemented the digital collaborative tool successfully by embedding it into its ERP systems which enabled the company to hold and streamline its team in order to perform efficient operations and interactions.

The company is now looking forward owning specialized Customer Relationship management facilities to tap in the market potential, to unleash the benefits of life-time customers to the extent of their participation. Moreover the company is working on other aspects of e-supply management to realize its aspiration of giving direct advantage to customers by eliminating the chain of intermediaries. They are expanding towards new economic equations of distribution.

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