



Improving project-office productivity

How ECLEVA helped Mainbrace simplify document management and reduce project risk using Microsoft Dynamics

Overview

Mainbrace Constructions (Mainbrace) is a retail-construction specialist with 180 full-time workers in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Employees continuously exchanged documents and contracts with architects, engineers and subcontractors. But with everyone working from different devices; contracts, plans and transmittals were diffused across multiple hard-drives and email Inboxes. Microsoft Partner, ECLEVA, has built a single, secure repository for all documents using cloud technologies and Microsoft Dynamics. Today, better document management helps Mainbrace complete projects more efficiently, reduce construction-site risk and adapt to new challenges.

The Need

Since 1990, Mainbrace has completed over 1,000 projects from minor store refurbishments to major re-builds, worth AUD 200 million. And as in many construction companies, a growing workforce and changing technology has required new ways to communicate. As new technologies came along – such as Skype or Dropbox – employees changed the way they worked. This resulted in a communication mix that became ever more complex.

CASE STUDY

One result was that critical project documents – including transmittals – became diffused around the company in multiple applications. This was a problem because many of these documents had contractual significance. Good project management meant keeping all live documents in one place and in one format. But this became harder and more time-consuming as documents were exchanged in multiple formats, which then had to be retrieved from different stakeholders.

Version control was another challenge. According to Angus Greenwood, Systems and Innovation, Mainbrace, documents were stored in multiple locations: as a result, employees spent up to three hours ensuring all contractors on a major project received updated plans. “The risk of contractors not having the right documents is massive,” says Angus. “In the construction industry, if you’re building off the wrong drawing, the consequences can be very detrimental – not to mention the cost of rectification.”

What Mainbrace needed was a single, secure and straightforward way to manage all key project documents. Key requirements were version control, ease of access and governance. Subcontractors needed to feel confident they were working from the latest plans. Equally, was the opportunity for instant access from mobile devices.

The Solution

Microsoft Partner, ECLEVA, seeks to use existing technologies to create solutions that do not require new code. This helps to avoid wasting time and money when creating new capabilities. According to CEO, Patrick Northcott, this guiding principle helps to differentiate ECLEVA from other business software-solution providers.

“Our solutions are never over-complex, so they are easy to maintain and upgrade,” says Patrick. “This means our clients don’t waste money creating capabilities they don’t need. Also, we build on customers’ existing technology stack. If employees are using Outlook or Office, then our solution will feel like an evolution: it works the way they do.”

ECLEVA is also a construction-industry expert. “We start from a position of construction-industry expertise, and we take the time to really understand our client’s objectives,” says Patrick. “We begin with workshops, we map client needs, then we create the solution using technology that is already out there, such as Azure, SharePoint and Dynamics.”

From 2010 to 2018, ECLEVA completed multiple projects that help everyone collaborate more easily. A transmittal-management system gives everyone confidence and proof that the right people receive the right documents at the right time – thus minimising risk.

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- Angus Greenwood, Systems and Innovation, Mainbrace



CASE STUDY

In addition, we built two Microsoft Dynamics add-ons, which monitor subcontractor performance and track on-site operational health and safety (OH&S) compliance.

1. A document and transmittal-management system

Mainbrace decided the best way to manage project documents and transmittals was to create a central, live repository. Using cloud technologies – including Dynamics 365 – ECLEVA created an easy-to-use and easy-to-update document-storage system. Authorship metadata is appended to all documents, so they are easy to locate. In addition, ECLEVA built a web portal for secure access by architects and subcontractors.

2. A subcontractor performance-management solution

Mainbrace works with scores of subcontractors but had no way of capturing its experience on each contract for future benefit. ECLEVA built a subcontractor-rating tool using an existing Dynamics CRM installation. The performance of each subcontractor is logged against standard metrics and rolled up into an overall rating. This helps Mainbrace project managers select the best-suited and best-performing subcontractors for each new project.

3. Operational health and safety (OH&S) monitoring and tracking

Safety is the top priority for Mainbrace, so directors want assurance that OH&S policies are being enforced. ECLEVA again used the Dynamics platform to create a tool to measure on-site compliance against critical OH&S metrics. This provides directors with real-time reporting and ensures the day-to-day prioritisation of safety measures.

The way ECLEVA structures its engagements keeps everyone focused on practical solutions. The account manager defines the business need; a client delivery manager takes ownership of capability delivery; the business analysts do the testing; and the in-house development team builds the technical solution.

"With a lean, focused team, we completed the document-management project in two-thirds of the budgeted time," says Patrick. "Then we delivered hands-on training to approximately 15 contract administrators plus additional site supervisors. We ensure workers learn time-saving features."

"Now we have full transparency on when documents are sent, delivered and downloaded. This has de-risked our projects immensely."

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Result

According to Angus, the new transmittal-management tool has reduced workloads on large projects by up to 83 percent. "It used to take us three hours to properly distribute drawings on a major project, now it takes 30 minutes and sometimes far less," he says. "We needed an affordable solution – and this is it."

The tool has also dramatically reduced the risk of contractors working from incorrect drawings. "Now we have full transparency on when documents were sent, delivered and downloaded," says Angus. "This has de-risked our projects immensely."

"Our conversations with contractors are more informed, we have full transparency, and we can sleep at night knowing that all contractors have access to the live document."

By supporting collaborative working, the new tool also helps Mainbrace make better use of its human resources. The company now tasks junior workers with preparation of the transmittal communications, which is then reviewed and approved by seniors online.

"The ECLEVA tool also helps our tendering process," says Angus. "When we go out to tender, we can see which contractors have downloaded their documents. We've never had this ability before, and it helps us keep on top of the administration."

ECLEVA has now worked with Mainbrace for over ten years. During that time, we have created numerous business software solutions that help Mainbrace grow, save costs and increase productivity.

"We build on our customers' existing technology stack and find a solution that works the way they do," says Patrick. "One project has led to another and that's what makes us a trusted, long-term IT partner."

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Learn more about how ECLEVA helps construction companies save costs and operate more efficiently. Contact us at info@ecleva.com or call us on 02 9467 9300.