

January 2010

Empowering SharePoint Decision Makers with MetaVis Architect Suite

A Case Study by Chris Poteet

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One of the greatest challenges in implementing Microsoft's collaboration platform, SharePoint, is the inability for key decision makers to take advantage of its powerful capabilities to organize and classify information. From SharePoint administrators, to consultants, and even end users - a void exists to empower them to create and maintain robust information architectures to know what content they have and where they have it.

Recently, a Fortune 20 company was migrating off an existing content management system into Microsoft SharePoint Server 2007. After analyzing the migration into SharePoint, the team decided an additional tool was necessary to move content into finely tuned information architecture for their intranet running on SharePoint.

Until this point, content types were maintained by enlisting a developer to create a SharePoint feature and to deploy it into each site collection. While this is a good practice, it was expensive and very time consuming to make changes to content types and metadata. A solution was necessary to allow these types of changes without having to involve developers and to enable reclassification to the information architecture content when needed in order to effectively manage content in SharePoint.

To solve these problems, the MetaVis Architect Suite was brought in to help meet the needs of the SharePoint decision makers. First, the intranet content owner didn't need to be well versed in creating features to publish changes to the content type taxonomy. This enabled the content managers to actively shape the information architecture by the ever-evolving nature of the intranet. By using the MetaVis Classifier tool (a part of the Architect Suite), they were also able to re-classify content and even preserve critical metadata columns, such as modified/created date, to retain the lifecycle management processes in place for intranet governance. The Architect Suite also included a site copy feature that enabled the sites to be moved to different areas of the site collection without losing content and content type relationships, while maintaining the relationship to the site definition.

The Architect Suite enabled SharePoint administrators to sync different site collections for site structure and content types. A common challenge for SharePoint administrators is keeping different environments synchronized for purposes of development, test, and production. By enabling the administrators to compare site collections regardless of location in the farm and then provision the differences, the need for such features was once again alleviated.

Finally, documentation surrounding the taxonomy of the various SharePoint environments was automatically updated through the use of Architect Suite. Using a drag and drop (or Copy/Paste) interface that resembled mind-mapping exercises (a popular method used by SharePoint information architects for documentation), the documentation was always up-to-date. Even if changes were made to the SharePoint environment inside of the SharePoint UI, MetaVis was able to compare the diagrams in the program to the current SharePoint environment and update them to correspond to the changes made inside of SharePoint.

The MetaVis Architect Suite solved several issues and contributed to a successful implementation and adoption of SharePoint in a large enterprise. Whether you are a SharePoint administrator, architect or a power user, MetaVis provides powerful tools for a successful implementation.