ONLINE PROJECT MANAGEMENT (2013-2014)

PROJECT YEAR	2013-2014
CUSTOMER DEPARTMENT(S)	Initially IT, expanded to Government-wide
PROJECT COST	$0 Capital
	$149 per month Operating Expense (following selection of vendor)

PROJECT NEED

Augusta has developed a detailed internal Project Management (PM) function within the Information Technology (IT) Department over the last decade. In the autumn of 2010, Augusta conducted a review of departmental practices using the consulting firm Plante-Moran (http://www.plantemoran.com/). The PM tools were one of the items that the firm reviewed as part of their analysis.

One of the recommendations from Plante-Moran's study was that Augusta needed to streamline the PM tools that were being used. The IT Department, particularly the Business Application Services (BAS) Group, was using a set of large documents that were intended to enable Project Leaders (the in-house project management personnel) to keep track of virtually any kind of IT project. As the technology projects became more complex, so did the project management guides that were being used. In fact, the PM tools had evolved from humble beginnings as a Microsoft Excel-based software tool, to a Microsoft Project-based setup (which proved to be extremely cumbersome and unsuitable) and finally to the set of Microsoft Word documents that were supposed to be fill-in-the-blank, but were more akin to Internal Revenue Service (IRS) 1040 forms. Plante-Moran's suggestion was to break the large project manuals into smaller manuals based on project type. In summary, the complexity of the guides turned into more of a hindrance than a help to the IT staff, and Plante-Moran saw simplification as a solution.

IT explored automation as a solution to the problem. The first attempt to automate a project management tool was implemented using Microsoft SharePoint. SharePoint enabled IT to build "sites" for each major project, and also provided the means to store most kinds of files that project leaders would need access to. It had the added benefit of permitting personnel from "customer" departments to be able to view data that was pertinent to an IT project that affected them.   Unfortunately, this solution was proven to be cumbersome for PM, since the day-to-day management of SharePoint was complex and, even within IT, many people were wary of using many of the tools because SharePoint proved to be unforgiving of mistakes. The decision was made in 2013 to abandon SharePoint as a project management tool and look for something more suited for flexible PM.
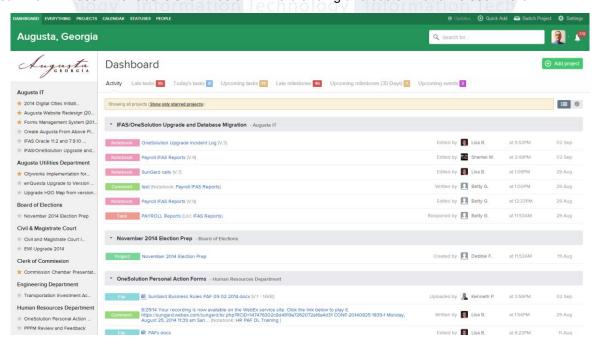
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In 2013, the IT BAS Group conducted testing of multiple project tools. The group was divided into four teams that were responsible for reviewing different tools, including competitive presentations and demonstrations of their findings. The end result was that TeamworkPM was chosen as the PM tool best suited to the needs of the IT Department. It has also been found to suit the PM needs of our end users as well.

Teamwork PM is a cloud-based (and obviously "online") tool that permits the users to perform the functions below:

- Customize a web site (with branding such as logos and colors) for the organization.
- A user-oriented dashboard that shows all the projects and tasks which are applicable to the user who is logged in.
- Create unlimited projects for various "companies" or "groups" within the organization.
- Add people to projects from inside or outside of the organization. **IMPORTANT!**
- Cloud-based SaaS so that accessibility is available from inside or outside Augusta's firewall. **IMPORTANT!**
- Manage security levels for personnel that are assigned to projects. **IMPORTANT!**
- Create task lists, tasks, and sub-tasks so that hierarchies can be maintained.
- Create Milestones of major project dates.
- Generate Calendars of projects and tasks.
- Provide notifications to selected personnel or groups of personnel for tasks, messages, etc.
- Create Notebooks for including narrative items (meeting notes, etc.) in the project.
- Upload files such as Word documents, video and audio, spreadsheets, etc.
- Use Messages for project collaboration.
- Create templates for projects and tasks.
- Use Teamwork from a desktop (browser) and a mobile app on multiple platforms. **IMPORTANT!**
- Integrations with other services like Google Drive, Box, OneDrive, and DropBox.

The TeamworkPM user interface is shown below. The branding and customization is seen here:
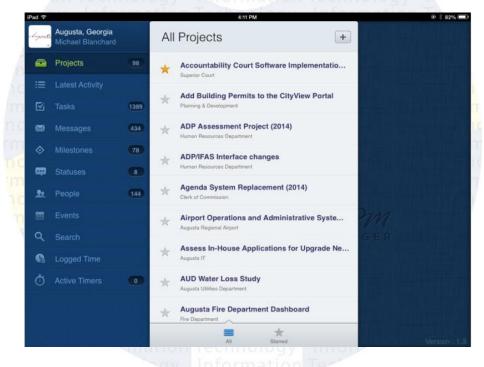
Implementation was easy and there was very little need to train anyone within IT. One of the major "selling points" for TeamworkPM was that software was very intuitive, and it also has a suite of help tools that are very easy to use and understand. In the rare cases where a staff member had questions that were not addressed by the help tools, TeamworkPM technical support was very quick to respond. Their response to our questions was critical to their selection as the vendor of choice for this project.

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT!

Mobility is particularly important for this project because the intention of IT in using this technology is to make project information available anytime and anywhere to the people who are authorized to see and use it. TeamworkPM features mobile-ready apps for iOS and Android. Pictures of the apps are included below.

The screen shot immediately below is the "All Projects" view within the IOS app (shown on an iPad). This screen provides the user with a view of all the projects that they have access to. The view below is that of a System Administrator, so it has access to not only all of the projects that a regular user might see, but ALL of the projects in the system.

PROJECT USAGE

There have been a number of projects that Augusta government departments are using in order to improve collaboration. A sample of these projects has been chosen below for discussion of how TeamworkPM tool has been applied. The list below only describes five projects that have been highlighted for review, but it should be known that IT has been using TeamworkPM internally for almost one year (as of August 2014), and there have been dozens of projects created and managed using the software.

- **Sungard OneSolution Implementation**: This project is using TeamworkPM to manage the internal meeting notes, project tasks, and accessibility to documents that are important to the project. The site is

facilitating collaboration between IT and the key departments such as Procurement, Finance, Payroll, and HR, as well as the vendor (Sungard), whose project managers have access to the project.

- **Earth Day**: April 26, 2014 was Augusta's first Earth Day celebration that involved an association between the City of Augusta, the Southeastern Natural Sciences Academy - since renamed to the Phinizy Center for Water Sciences (http://phinizycenter.org/) - and Georgia Regents University. The event was held at the Phinizy Swamp Nature Park. In the months leading up to the event, personnel from all three agencies used TeamworkPM to share files, videos, pictures, and other graphics in order to collaborate on plans and marketing materials. Earth Day 2014 was a great success and planning for 2015 (using TeamworkPM, of course) is underway. You can read about the 2014 event here: http://www.augustaga.gov/1909/Earth-Day-2014-Celebration

- **Election Planning**: 2014 is a big year for elections in Augusta. Beginning in May 2014 and ending possibly in December (in the event of a runoff), there are potentially 5 separate elections. The Board of Elections (BOE) has been an enthusiastic adopter of new technology, and TeamworkPM has been no exception. Typically, setting up an election requires the cooperation of many individuals to be in certain places at specific time, so TeamworkPM has proven to be useful to the BOE in ensuring that tasks have been completed.

- **Housing and Community Development**: The Augusta Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) was one of the first non-IT adopters of TeamworkPM. HCD has many projects that are federally-funded, and as a result there are many bureaucratic checklists that have to be maintained in order to ensure that specific goals and criteria are being met. HCD uses TeamworkPM to track the individual projects, bids, plans, and contractors.

- **Human Resources PPPM Review and Feedback**: This project, which is slated for September 2014, will involve the input of the Augusta government department heads to offer suggestions for the improvement of the Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual (PPPM). The original document was adopted several years ago, and is in need of modification to bring it into compliance with current legislation and best practices of government. The Human Resources Department (HR) is coordinating the effort to update the document, and TeamworkPM will be used as the tool by which HR's customers will enter their suggestions. HR staff will then review the suggestions, convert them into project tasks as applicable, and then close the tasks as the updates are approved.

CONCLUSION

After a somewhat rocky beginning to the use of professional project management within Augusta IT, the application of a well-written and comprehensive PM tool has enabled Augusta IT to facilitate the growth of collaboration among customer departments. The minimal cost and high usability of the solution means that it will place effective PM tools in the hands of personnel who are expected to coordinate multiple complex projects at one time, benefitting themselves, their departments, and their customers.