

SiteScape Forum the Standard for Canadian Standards Organizations

Standards Council
of Canada



Conseil canadien
des normes

Knowledge-based organizations worldwide face major challenges in managing their information efficiently. The Standards Council of Canada (SCC) is no exception. The Standards Council is in the business of helping Canadians develop, apply and promote standards – information-intensive publications that undergo frequent revision. Zbigniew Ignatowicz, manager of SCC's information systems division, began looking for a solution that would reduce the mountain of paper that results from this massive and ongoing collaborative editing effort.

"We formerly mailed out thousands of pounds of paper each year," says Ignatowicz. "We realized that we needed to move to the Internet to become more efficient and to cut our paper burden." With the help of SiteScape Forum, Web-based team collaboration software from SiteScape, Inc., the Standards Council is now setting the document sharing and management standard for other standards groups.

"SiteScape Forum has helped us created a template for how standards organizations can use the Internet for team collaboration and document sharing," says Ignatowicz. "All draft standards documents are uploaded and are available to Canadian experts 24 hours a day. Other standards bodies are evaluating SiteScape Forum through our site."

To encourage other agencies (the Canadian Standards Association, Underwriters Laboratories of Canada, and the Telecommunications Standards Advisory Council, just to name a few) to adopt SiteScape Forum, the Standards Council is providing extensive "host" services to allow them to test the team collaboration software, get familiar with its features, and evaluate the system.

Ignatowicz says adoption of the Forum software has even leapfrogged out of the standards arena and into government departments. According to Ignatowicz, "The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat has purchased its own copy, and we expect other adoptions too."

Slashed Copier Use by One-Third

The Standards Council is a far-reaching umbrella organization that oversees the activities of Canada's National Standards System (NSS) – a partnership comprised of over 250 organizations. Some of these develop standards while others are conformity assessment bodies that determine the compliance of products or services with a standard's requirements. The NSS also includes some 15,000 individuals who contribute to committees that develop national or international standards, most notably the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC).

Organization: Standards Council of Canada

Industry: Standards Development

Business Problem:

Needed an online system for editing, distributing and storing thousands of documents related to international and national standards development

Website: <http://www.scc.ca/>

Problems Solved:

- Streamlined standards development
- Reduced paper burden by 30%
- Supported administrative processes and workflow

The Forum Implementation:

- SiteScape Forum, with 1,000 users

The Bottom Line:

- SiteScape Forum provides a collaboration platform for information sharing and document review across international and national standards entities.

"A National Standard of Canada must be developed by consensus of a balanced committee representing producers, consumers and other relevant interests," according to Ignatowicz. "It must undergo a public review process and be available in both official languages, and fulfill other legal criteria. In addition to paper and labor costs incurred in distributing drafts and circulating comments, there is the inevitable time delay between shipping and receipt."

Ignatowicz says that in the first seven months of the year, the use of document and discussion forums within SiteScape Forum cut copier usage in the organization's Standards Division by about one-third -- or just under half a million copies-- from the comparable period in the prior year. He estimates that this paper and labor reduction translates to about \$100,000 and expects the savings to increase dramatically as more agencies adopt SiteScape Forum.

Good Right From the Box

The Standards Council found that SiteScape Forum provided virtually an "out of the box" solution to their needs for document sharing, annotation and revision control. "We chose Forum for standards development, mostly because of its open architecture and also because it is easy to customize," says Ignatowicz. "We didn't plan on extensive customization but wanted to have that option readily available."

An ISO/IEC committee that deals with IT-related standardization was the first group within the Standards Council to have SiteScape Forum deployed. Ignatowicz believes the group's IT orientation speeded up introduction of the collaboration tool and helped develop a model for user involvement in implementation. "Users were involved in deployment since day one," he explains. "All forums are administered by many 'users' who are not part of MIS. Actually, the design of the system was done by Standards Council staff with little MIS involvement. I think that distributed administration is one of the strengths of this product."

If You Want to Customize, It's Easy

The minimal customization that has been done was mostly to provide bilingual log in to Forum and to give system administrators ready access to additional user information. Student intern C. Donald Brown, who did some customized programming recently, is enthusiastic about the support he received from SiteScape. "It was kind of tricky at first," says Brown, "because this was my first 'real-life' programming job. The customization became easier as I became more experienced with TCL and the product. The SiteScape support has been great. They told me exactly what module to modify to achieve my goal, and often gave me the necessary TCL code."

Because of Canada's two official languages, Brown made modifications to the log in screen. The SiteScape Forum software is available in several languages, but the Standards

Council needed a log in screen that would work in both French and English, provide working Help/Aide and Register/Enregistre buttons, and subsequently allow users to choose their operating language.

Streamlining Product Accreditation

An additional responsibility of the Standards Council is the accreditation of Canadian testing and calibration labs. For this task, the agency is using Forum to foster better collaboration, speed up the accreditation process, and reduce the paperwork required for testing commercial products against the standards.

Ignatowicz says that of the 68 labs that are ready to employ SiteScape Forum, about half have begun to use the software for accreditation and the remainder are potential users because of Forum's capability to increase efficiency.

Uniting Multiple Platforms to a Common Goal

Although the Standards Council's system runs on the Compaq Tru64 platform, Forum's ability to run on Alpha- and Intel-based Windows NT, Sun Solaris, and RedHat Linux systems should help the Standards Council's effort to make Forum itself into the standard for standards organizations.

"We can't very well ask other bureaus to reinvent their information systems," asserts Ignatowicz. "Other organizations are using NT versions, and the availability of SiteScape Forum on Solaris definitely helps. Multi-platform support has further progressed us toward our goal of having all standards committees and volunteers using Forum."