# Government IT Agencies Collaborate and Share Resources with Portal

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| Germany  Customer Profile  DStGB, the German Association for Towns and Municipalities (Deutscher Städte-und Gemeindebund)  www.dstgb.de  Situation  With growing numbers of new IT solutions and best practices to more effectively manage increasing volumes of data, local governments lacked the ability to share their discoveries with colleagues and were constantly reinventing the wheel.  Solution  The DStGB launched a series of collaborative initiatives among members for sharing best practices and technology developed using Microsoft software, including a portal built on Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services.  Benefits   * Increased knowledge sharing and collaboration. * Minimized duplication of work. * Support of distributed IP development approaches. * Increased compliance to shared standards. | “The Solutions Sharing Network shows what is possible with a service-oriented government, one that encourages dialogue between business, government and citizens.”  — Franz-Reinhard Habbel, Speaker» DStGB  Even though local and regional governments across Germany were actively developing new IT solutions and best practices for more effectively managing growing volumes of data, they lacked the ability to share their discoveries with colleagues. Without a mechanism for collaboration or a central point of access for sharing new ideas, public sector organizations were constantly reinventing the wheel.  Situation  C:\Users\v-nwrigh\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.Word\Germany.jpgFor municipal residents, local businesses and trade associations in Germany, day-to-day business means filing applications and frequently being able to provide detailed information. Public administration agencies wanted to improve their services and share best practices, however, capturing and disseminating information technology (IT) knowledge was difficult due to lack of a process for gathering the information, or a common repository. |

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|  | The German Association for Towns and Municipalities (Deutscher Städte-und Gemeindebund, DStGB), which serves 12,000 cities and municipalities, recognized that its geographically dispersed members included IT experts, educators, and civil servants who were having difficulty communicating, therefore, the duplication of solutions and effort was common. Unfortunately, valuable resources like application code, best practices, and processes or process documentation created by different government agencies was sometimes abandoned or used only once. Developers, network administrators and project managers found few opportunities to share or improve on IT solutions and best practices in collaboration with others. Various platforms were adopted to address the problem, but not many people were able to use these solutions due to their complexity.  Additionally, one of the biggest and most important projects for modernizing Europe’s administrations is the implementation of the European Services Directive. The directive—voted into law at the end of 2006 by the European Parliament—aims to reduce bureaucracy within European Union (EU) member states, centralize processes, and promote business growth with three conditions:   * Set a time limit for applications to be approved. * Provide a single point of contact and information. * Set up and accept all applications and forms online.   According to the European Parliament, these new user-friendly regulations must be implemented by European states no later than September 1, 2009.  In Germany, these requirements made the need to improve IT services and share efforts across government agencies even more time-sensitive. “With this changed government structure, we need more communication among agencies than ever,” said Franz-Reinhard Habbel, Speaker of the DStGB.  Solution  The DStGB members and staff worked together on several IT-related initiatives before finding a solution that worked. The Microsoft® Solutions Sharing Network (SSN) program, offered free to participants, was created by Microsoft to drive the sharing of IT solutions and best practices within public sector technical communities. It provides governments, associations and organizations with a mechanism for facilitating the trusted sharing and co-development of effective, secure solutions for their constituents. In Germany, the Microsoft SSN program supplies resources by way of software and technical support for a portal |

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| ”We are pleased to have a standard platform on SharePoint that is very fast, easy to use and change that can be customized within minutes.”  — Franz-Reinhard Habbel, Speaker » DStGB | focused on securely sharing IT-related content to help meet the technology challenges towns and municipalities face.  This portal is Internet-facing where required, and fully managed through a set of self-service facilities. Using this solution, a community of like-minded individuals can collaborate to facilitate the reuse of knowledge and reduce the cost and time required to develop effective solutions. ”The Solutions Sharing Network shows what is possible with a service-oriented government; one that encourages dialogue between business, government and citizens,” said Habbel.  Technical offerings the DStGB Association has collaborated on to date include a spatial data system of municipal geographies, an electronic trade register, an online system of business registration, and a set of Internet portals. Governments, organizations, and agencies can both contribute and take existing knowledge and solution-sets from an SSN portal as needed. SSN can also be drawn upon by academic institutions to aid education and research around open-application development. That same catalog may be used to share knowledge, solutions, and technical information between both commercial and non-commercial organizations and institutions.  Results  Several measures have already been enacted using the SSN portal technology and support network. These initiatives include:   * E-Government * MEDIA@Komm Innovation ([www.mediakomm.net](http://www.mediakomm.net)) * Network Towns of the Future (Netzwerk Zukunftsstädte) and the Innovators Club * Deutschland-Online ([www.deutschland-online.de](http://www.deutschland-online.de)), a comprehensive project that combines existing information from the other programs.   Part of the e-government initiative, the e-Government Starter Kit (EGSK), is an inter-departmental service platform based on Microsoft BizTalk® Server, Microsoft Internet Explorer and Microsoft Office. The EGSK was developed by Microsoft Germany specifically for public administrations. Agencies can leverage the wealth of experience captured in this starter kit to address common processes that can benefit from IT and implement technical solutions without deep technical knowledge. |
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| For more informationFor general questions about Solutions Sharing Network, please email getssn@microsoft.com. Visit http://solshare.net, an online community to share public sector IT ideas and best practices. Visit the Deutscher Städte-und Gemeindebund (German Association for Towns and Municipalities) at: http://www.dstgb.de | Another of these initiatives is the national MEDIA@Komm-Transfer network where participating municipalities have come together to standardize a selection of e-government capabilities. These projects deal with a variety of government functions, from making information easily accessible to completing transactions online. They include Internet portals and virtual town halls, a digital signature initiative, a virtual health network, geographic information systems, an electronic government mailroom, e-payment and e-procurement capabilities, internal services, and mobility.  The Network Towns of the Future initiative is an exchange of experience concerning the use of modern broadband technology. Deutsche Telekom launched the “T-City” competition for German towns from 25,000 up to 100,000 inhabitants. The task was to develop innovative ideas to use modern broadband information and communication technology to the advantage of all citizens. With applications from 52 towns with over 1000 trendsetting ideas, in February 2007, Friedrichshafen was chosen to be the first “T-City” in Germany. The prizes included investments of up to €35 million for broadband infrastructure and equipment, personnel and financial capital worth up to €80 million for implementing contest ideas. The 52 applicant towns will exchange ideas and best practices through the T-City initiative.  Benefits  Though the SSN portal is still young numerous, long-lasting benefits for government and its constiuents are expected to come from the creation and ongoing development of these collaborative communities. Additional benefits include:   * More accessible government information and the ability to conduct many government transactions over the Internet for citizens. * Increased knowledge-sharing and * Less duplication of work by sharing code and best practices in code development, change management, project management and other IT-related information. * Better communication among government agencies and, in turn, increased compliance with shared standards. |