

CASE STUDY:

Defense Acquisition University

As the Department of Defense (DoD) corporate university for acquisition education, the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) provides mandatory, assignment-specific and continuing education courses for military and civilian acquisition personnel. The mission of the DAU is to provide practitioner training and services to enable the DoD's Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (AT&L) community to make smart business decisions and deliver timely and affordable capabilities to the warfighter. The AT&L workforce currently consists of over 126,000 Department of Army, Department of Navy, Department of Air Force and Defense agency professionals serving in 13 acquisition, technology, and logistics career fields.

The DAU is the one institution that touches nearly every member of the AT&L workforce throughout all professional career stages. It provides a full range of basic, intermediate, and advanced certification training, assignment-specific training, performance support, job-relevant applied research, and continuous learning opportunities. The DAU dedicates itself to providing its stakeholders with the highest quality learning experience possible, which it calls the DAU Experience.

CHALLENGE

With the vision of enabling the AT&L workforce to achieve the right acquisition outcomes, the DAU sought an improved IT solution for managing purchase and training requests. It required a web-based, simple-to-use system that would be essentially transparent to personnel making requests, with features like single sign-on through integration into the DAU's Active Directory service. It also required that the system be easy to administer, with flexible reporting capabilities to automate the manual work done by finance and buyer personnel to track spending. The DAU saw automation of micro purchases as not only an important step in financial process improvement, but also as a logical extension of the agency's overall mission to evangelize the value of 21st Century e-Learning by demonstrating the value of web-based acquisition automation.

The DAU decided that a BPM-based Micro-Purchase Management System would meet its requirements and ensure a simple, automated, and streamlined approach to processing purchase and training requisitions within the agency.

APPROACH

The DAU has been lauded by numerous industry associations and publications both for its training methodology and its technology infrastructure. These accolades include multiple U.S. Distance Learning Association awards, Corporate University Best-In-Class distinctions, American Society of Training and Development BEST awards, Computerworld's 21st Century Achievement award, and the eGov Knowledge Management Award, as well as citations from Training Magazine, Chief Learning Officer and others.

This tradition of excellence clearly set a high bar for the DAU's selection of a BPM vendor partner. After a thorough evaluation of several independent vendors, the DAU chose Appian as the BPM platform for its Micro-Purchase Management System.

Appian won the competitive bake-off based on the breadth and depth of its comprehensive BPM suite, its ease-of-use and 100 percent web-based architecture, its deeply-integrated business-level reporting, and the commitment, involvement, and expertise of Appian's professional services team.



SOLUTION

The Appian-based Micro-Purchase Management System simplifies, automates, and manages the soup-to-nuts process of purchase and training requisitions. Users submit a purchase or training request via a simple web-based form. The system validates the request to ensure compliance with all DAU policies. Based on the user's department, the system assesses the availability of budget codes from other DAU systems, and routes the request to various required approvers and key stakeholders based on the request type and other DAU business rules. When requisitions are either approved or rejected, users receive automatic e-mail notifications.

Because of Appian's integrated document and knowledge management capabilities, the system is able to track and compile request approval routes and comments made throughout the process. This delivers detailed visibility into the requisition at every stage of its lifecycle, and helps ensure that procurement funds are constantly properly utilized. Access to past requisitions and accumulated requisition reports provides buyers and managers with both the real-time and historical trend data needed for continuous process improvement efforts. The Micro-Purchase Management System also outputs details about the completed requisitions to a database, which allows DAU to use the information to integrate with other systems.

The system was delivered by gathering and finalizing requirements, and then configuring and deploying the Appian application. During this time, the system was supported by Appian consulting services for the development, testing, implementation, training, and deployment in the DAU's business environment.

RESULTS

By leveraging the Appian BPM Suite for the Micro-Purchase Management System, the DAU now provides a web-based environment to enforce processes and increase efficiency, reliability, and visibility. The Micro-Purchase Management System processes hundreds of requisitions and ensures that business rules and approvals are met in every instance. The system reduces requisition processing time, utilizes web forms to eliminate repetitive data entry, delivers reports that can be used to identify process bottlenecks, and enables the generation of other reports providing DAU management with vital data and statistics about micro-purchase training requisition trends. Perhaps most importantly, the consistency of reporting that Appian delivers is a huge benefit, ensuring that reporting data is accurate, which enables less time and effort on data validation and cleansing, and more focus on strategic business issues.

The DAU uses advanced technologies, knowledgesharing, and performance support to deliver a 21st Century total learning environment. Appian's BPM platform provides us a state-of-the-art tool for implementing financial controls, collaboration, and performance reporting to optimize our procurement processes.

- Mark Whiteside, Performance and Resource Management Director,
Defense Acquisition University

Appian

Appian provides a leading low-code software development platform that enables organizations to rapidly develop powerful and unique applications. The applications created on Appian's platform help companies drive digital transformation and competitive differentiation

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