

SmartSimple Database Software

“As innovative as you are”

For more information and a web-demonstration visit www.smartsimple.com and then contact Chris Jones, FORUM Consulting Group, Victoria BC, 250 386 7655 or forum@acncanada.net

So you have a new program to manage! If you are like many program managers in government, you are going to be dealing with *projects* – discrete sets of activities, each of them contributing to your program, and usually run by someone who reports to you. He or she might live in government, but increasingly they live in the private or non-profit sectors or in other levels of government - municipalities or First Nations for example. How do I manage them? “Aha,” you think. “I need a *project management database* so I know what’s going on!”

You talk to IT and explain your unique requirements. They build an applications model based on *their* view of your requirements. No vendor can quite match your work in reality so IT chooses the closest fit or suggests you pay for them to build one for you or modify someone else’s. You and your users are frustrated by the need to shape your work according to IT’s view of the world, not yours, and energy is wasted managing disconnected components, models and perhaps even vendors. The vendors (or the IT folks) promise expensive solutions you didn’t budget for. You become distracted from your real aim in life and your executive becomes disenchanted with their IT investment.

Then your world changes. The executive wants a new component added to your database and you call in the vendors or programmers again. The database never quite catches up to you or your program’s *real work*. You are in the middle of this when the auditors or the program evaluators arrive. “Yes,” you say, “we have a project database and it identifies all our projects, but.....”.

Sound familiar?

But what if *you yourself* could build the database to meet your exact requirements? What if you could expand or change its functions any time you liked? What if it were on the web so all the stakeholders could access the parts of it you gave them permission to access? And what if you could transfer all your legacy data into it quickly and easily - and the whole process cost less than your existing system?

And, best of all, what if you could do all this with no programming and no IT investment.

Can a database be built which that does all these things? Yes, it can, *but only if you look first at the management needs and not the data.*

A small Toronto company, SmartSimple, has done exactly this. They recognised the functional commonalities of database management and looked at them from a completely different perspective, that of *management’s common needs*. SmartSimple found that all project work is basically similar and that all project databases have a significant number of common characteristics – except for the data inside them. For example:

- many events and activities need to be recorded and managed;
- various people at different levels in your organisation, and sometimes other organisations, need access to the information;
- access needs to be explicitly and expertly controlled;
- one person is needed to run the show;
- work regimes and performance needs - and hence the data needs - keep changing;
- data needs (and access) are invariably hierarchical, but different people need different information at different times and for different reasons;
- access must be web based for convenient management, updating and access;

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- whatever their responsibility, people in the program need to be connected;
- new needs need to be reflected in hours or days, not months; and so on.

This led SmartSimple to design a database methodology that incorporates the common features from the viewpoint of all the users, management and others. Then they designed a way to capture and import data used in the application from existing or new sources so that it can replace any existing legacy. They put the whole thing on the web so everyone who needs to get at it can do.

Over 100 organisations from the Government of Canada and the US Navy on down are now using SmartSimple's database methodology to keep track of their business. .

SmartSimple's approach is independent of both context and content, operates independently of the data inside it, requires no programming or IT investment, can be operated, managed and changed by a single individual, and is inexpensive because you only pay when you use it. It is accessible through any web browser and sharable by any individual or user group "permitted" by you as program manager.

Applications include project management, project tracking, performance measurement, program evaluation, member/employee records, case management and customer/client relationship management.

Using SmartSimple, a single "Certified Administrator" shapes *one application* to fit the needs of all the various people associated with the program or entity from the individual workers to the executive committee. This is done by *selecting* internal "roles", "relationships" and "permissions" with no need for programming whatever.

Whatever, roles they play, the users can connect seamlessly to the data through the web. As roles change (as they always do) the system adapts quickly, easily and inexpensively to suit. Complex, expensive solutions are no longer needed; the Executive sees what it needs to see on reports and dashboards; energised program people see the "real world" of their own work; and energy is devoted to the core mission of the program, not to the database.

The key database metrics of the system are "hours and days" not "weeks and months".

What are these common management applications? While new ones are being developed by SmartSimple users all the time, some of those available now are as follows. *They are all user selected "options" within the same operational database. Some of them are available elsewhere, but not in your own database.*

Examples of Management Applications

Workflows and processes	How does this process work? Who is involved where?
Project and job tracking and management	Activity tracking – equipment, materials, resources, dates and deadlines, costs, etc
Job costing	Time tracking, time sheets, expense tracking
Organisation hierarchy/role definitions and management "permissions"	Organisational relationships. Who does what? Who can access what data?
Application, proposal and funding tracking	Track the progress and performance of funding applications
Reports and dashboards	Specific to each level in the hierarchy
Web forms	Editing, applications, maintenance, administration and tracking
Built in surveys	Performance evaluation and information collection
SmartFolders	File and document management
Referrals and contact management	Contact, relationship, "statusing" and referral management
Web page viewing	View pages from the database
Content management	Manage all the database content

Summary of SmartSimple Features

- Completely managed and operated on the web. If you can access the web you can access your SmartSimple database and enter or retrieve data
- Hosted on your servers or on SmartSimple's
- Handles as many internal and external users as you need, wherever they are located
- Defined access for executive, program manager, project managers and other internal users as well as partners and external users (for example contractors, field staff)
- All programs and features are enabled at the user level
- *No programming and no IT investment, now or later*
- No capital development costs
- A single database for all applications
- Creates applications without programming
- Easy to change database, data, participants or structure
- Easy but *controlled* access to all the participants who need it
- Simple data upload from legacy systems (several built-in methods)
- Access controlled by Administrator through "roles" and "permissions" functions
- Meets federal government data security standards
- A wide variety of built-in applications – you choose
- Low cost - you pay only when you use it
- Incorporates many communications utilities, such as instant messaging, email, calendars
- Easily learned

Example of User Groups with SmartSimple "Defined" Access (each group has access only to the data specified by the Data Administrator)

Internal

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| • Political (Minister's office) | Selected dashboards, reports and performance data |
| • Executive | Selected dashboards, reports and performance data |
| • Performance Measurement | Selected dashboards, reports and performance data |
| • Program Director/Manager | All program records and documents |
| • Regional program staff | Regional program and project records and documents |
| • Procurement/contract staff | Procurement and contract records and documents |

External

- | | |
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| • Partners (e.g. funding agencies, co-funders) | Specified reports and data |
| • Contractor Project Manager | Own individual project records and documents |