



NASA's IT Portfolio Management Takes Off With Expert Choice

CASE STUDY

- Challenge** Develop a collaborative process to prioritize IT investments and bring about trust and buy-in across the agency.
- Action** Implemented EC Comparison to structure and synthesize critical information about priorities and preferences in the organization.
- Results** Aligned priorities to resources and delivery solutions that helped the organization achieve objectives across all scenarios.

[Challenge]

NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center IT organization had numerous challenges to overcome in their yearly budgeting process:

- Demonstrate sound analysis and prioritization of IT projects before taxpayers' dollars are committed.
- Establish credibility within the Agency and clarify to staff how funding was allocated and what went into decisions.
- Improve morale within this new IT organization and overcome barriers of acceptance.

"The process of doing this was even better than the result of doing it. It was such a great process and the conversations and the context and all of that kind of stuff that was worth the price of admission."

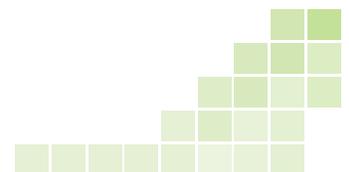
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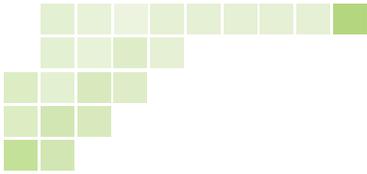
The new CIO understood it was important to establish a structured approach where none existed. This process needed to advance the Agency's research and development initiatives and technological leadership while meeting the requirements of the government's two budgeting offices: the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Government Accounting Office (GAO).

[Action]

During the budget prioritization process, NASA's new CIO introduced Expert Choice software as a tool for collaborative decision making. The team went through several key steps in establishing a collaborative decision-making process:

- Assembled a team that represented all the Directorates served by IT. This became the brain trust for specifying criteria, requirements and priorities.





“We’re not looking for a piece of technology that miraculously gives us money where we don’t have it or leads to unnecessary decisions. Expert Choice helps us synthesize information together as a group. It uses our knowledge to derive the benefit of the tool. We need to understand what we are making decisions about. And we have to be knowledgeable, aware and engaged and willing to apply the tool in order to do that. It is us – not the tool – that is going to give us what we want.”

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- Drew from requirements put forth by the OMB which provided the evaluation criteria. The criteria encompassed the evaluation of investments based on strategic direction and ROI.
- Incorporated IT’s alignment with the enterprise architecture and performance factors.
- Weighed and plugged criteria into the software ahead of time.

The NASA Team went forward with the prioritization process using two key Expert Choice tools: EC Comparison for group collaboration and Comparison for online use. In this case, the team started the process as a group and finished the process individually online – a testament to the functionality built into the process which supports collaboration among a physically dispersed team.

By working their way through the process, the NASA team was able to achieve their original goal of a prioritized portfolio of IT initiatives and investments. Even more importantly, the process enabled the team to have a healthy dialogue about priorities in a structured, yet fluid way. Everyone was able to express their opinions and provide facts about specific elements in the decision tree, and literally weigh in as individuals in order to generate a group decision with which all could agree.

Results

For NASA, the entire process was completed in about a week. Dedication by the team and Expert Choice paved the way for fundamental change in how the management team made decisions about critical business opportunities. Not only were they able to meet the most immediate deadline for OMB and GAO, the Goddard team created a process for ongoing evaluation of its investments going forth. At the same time, the team was able to achieve buy-in across Goddard Center – another first for NASA and its IT leaders.

The Expert Choice software and process delivered for NASA in key ways:

- Assisted the team in identifying priorities across its portfolio of investments.
- Ranked each priority by the maximum benefit provided. This kind of optimization is critical, especially in a government environment.
- Provided the capability to respond to budget changes or new funding within minutes rather than weeks.

As importantly, NASA moved one step closer to full compliance with the GAO’s Capital Planning & Investment Control Process which governs planning and maturity in making decisions about investment dollars and IT.

NASA’s next steps are to expand the Expert Choice decision process to additional decision types: 1) manage the “Job Jar”, 2) synthesize project requirements, and 3) select vendors who will perform some of the work that the organization needs done.

Expert Choice brings rational decision making to a complex world. Since 1983, Expert Choice has been a leader in collaborative decision making software, serving more than 100 of the Fortune 500 and 30 U.S. federal agencies. Expert Choice software is taught in over 100 universities and used in 60 countries worldwide. Its solutions are designed for business and government leaders who want to save time and improve the bottom line.

