WAND Client Testimonial Interview

The North Pole

The North Pole is a large non-profit toy manufacturing organization with a direct-to-consumer model. Information efficiency is critical because there is a single delivery person and deliveries can only be made once per year. The North Pole signed a blanket enterprise license for all of WAND's enterprise solutions.   Tinker Mistletoe, the North Pole's director of Knowledge Services, sat down with WAND to share his experience implementing WAND's suite of taxonomy based solutions.

Q: Tinker, can you share why you decided to start a taxonomy project at the North Pole?

The North Pole is an extremely old organization with a lot of documents and a lot of employees.   We did a digitization project about seven years ago and put everything into SharePoint. The elves were still complaining that they couldn't find the documents they needed to do their jobs.   We knew we needed to create a taxonomy to organize all this content so we went to the experts at WAND.

Q: How did WAND help you with your taxonomy?

We have large departments for engineering, procurement, manufacturing, and logistics. We are also a non-profit and we have a significant Elfin Resources (which I believe you call Human Resources) department.   Elves know a lot about building toys, but not much about building taxonomies.

WAND had pre-defined taxonomies for each area. We logged into the WAND Taxonomy Library Portal and downloaded the taxonomies in SharePoint Term Store format. With these foundation taxonomies, we could sit down with elves from each department and customize the taxonomies. Even without any taxonomy experience, it was easy to edit something that had already been built.   Having access to the pre-defined foundation taxonomies from WAND saved us a huge amount of time and the

taxonomies we ended up with were a lot more comprehensive than they would have been if we had started from scratch.

Q: The North Pole was an early adopter of DiscoverMe, a new solution that leverages taxonomies for employee expertise classification, search and collaboration. Tell me more about that.

When we originally came to WAND to create a taxonomy for SharePoint, we were only thinking about tagging our documents.   WAND showed us a new solution they are bringing to the market, DiscoverMe. DiscoverMe is an add-in to SharePoint and gave each elf their own profile to classify themselves with skills and expertise based on the very same WAND taxonomies that we are using to tag documents!   With DiscoverMe, elves can now search for other elves based on the taxonomy to identify experts who can answer questions or begin collaborating. With as many elves as we have, it's impossible to know everybody so this is a great tool for connecting and engaging our workforce. Documents are important but they only tell part of the story – the expertise that our elves have developed over the centuries is our most important information asset.

Here is an example. Just one month after deploying DiscoverMe, a toymaking team was struggling to get the rotor angles correct on a new racing drone. We were running up against a deadline – if they couldn't solve the problem, we would have had to place an order from a third-party supplier of racing drones to have them ready to give to children this year. Ordering from third-parties is always more expensive for us. Our team used DiscoverMe to find an elf who had previously worked on rotors for Toy Helicopters - she quickly helped the team solve the issue. The team endorsed her expertise and gave her a positive testimonial on her DiscoverMe profile. The elves love connecting with other elves that share their interests and without DiscoverMe, this type of collaboration would not have been possible!

Q: The North Pole is a product centric organization. How did WAND help you manage that data?

Poor product data was really slowing us down. If a child asks for something specific, like an Xbox One, then things are easy. The problem is a lot of kids are not that specific. We get a lot of requests for things like "a pink tutu with sparkles" or "pirate stuff" or "something for my little brother". When we get those, it used to take a lot of time to find the right present from our catalog.

We deployed WAND's [eCommerce Taxonomy Portal and PIM](#) to design a product taxonomy with the categories we offer (toys, clothing, etc.) and the attributes (color, brand, sizes, materials, features, target age range) for each of these categories.   We then loaded each of our SKUs and used the WAND tools to assign attributes to each.   We feed this structured data into our inventory system and now when we get a request like "pink tutu with sparkles" we can navigate through the taxonomy to the Clothing>Girls' Clothing>Skirts>Tutus category and filter by Color: Pink and Embellishments: Sparkles.   We've reduced our list processing time by 72%, which makes a huge difference when you are an Elf on the Shelf!

We have also exported the data into an ecommerce front end and deployed an online presence and kiosks at malls where kids can search through our toys and create an electronic letter to Santa Claus listing the presents they would like to receive.   This has allowed Santa to dramatically decrease the amount of time he spends at shopping malls during our busy season!

Q: Thanks for your time, Tinker! Anything else to add?

Taxonomy may not be as exciting as racing drones or as fun as Christmas Trees, but it certainly is important and we found that spending the time to organize our content more effectively has paid dividends through our ability to find and share knowledge within our organization. If you want to take control of your information with taxonomy, you should visit WAND's website at http://www.wandinc.com. Happy holidays and Merry Christmas!