smartsheet

U.S. General Services Administration department saves thousands of dollars and time with Smartsheet automations and visualizations

Smartsheet enables a presidentially mandated office of the General Services Administration to save hours on project tracking and updates, with better visualization for reporting real-time status to leadership — all the way up to the White House.

> **Automating the process of sending out reminder emails for me and the four directors has saved two and a half hours a day. If you average out those hourly pay rates, that's $71,500 in a year that can be now redirected toward actual project management or developing new projects.**

Tracie D. Strack, Special Projects Manager,
Integrated Award Environment,
U.S. General Services Administration

GSA

Customer:
GSA

Industry:
Government

Organization Size:
Enterprise (10,000+ employees)

Region:
North America

Website:
gsa.gov

GSA provides workplaces by constructing, managing, and preserving government buildings and by leasing and managing commercial real estate. GSA's acquisition solutions offer private sector professional services, equipment, supplies, and IT to government organizations and the military.

Background:
The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) has a duty to responsibly manage taxpayer funds, both in project budgets and in the organization's own efficient work performance. The Integrated Award Environment (IAE) within the Federal Acquisition Service (FAS) oversees special programs including management of the government's COVID-19 pandemic response, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, and federal awards management through the SAM.gov platform. Smartsheet helps IAE streamline communication and updates, more effectively visualize program data and status, and provide clear and timely reporting to leadership all the way up the federal hierarchy.

Solution:
"We're a presidentially mandated program, and we need to tell our story at that level," says Tracie D. Strack, special projects manager for IAE. *"Smartsheet allows us to do that. Instead of walking through a 30-slide deck, we can deliver a briefing from a dashboard that visualizes data and metrics, and provide the link to it so that the people we're speaking with have exactly the information they need, when they need it."*

IAE, part of the Office of Systems Management within the FAS, is responsible for the administration of systems contained within the federal awards lifecycle. This includes special programs such as the COVID-19 economic relief efforts within the American Recovery Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA-21), as well as systems management and consolidation across the organization.

When Strack joined GSA in 2016, Smartsheet was already in place as a preferred solution. She was more familiar with Microsoft Project after 25 years working with the U.S. Army, and her initial impulse was to specially request it in place of Smartsheet. But she soon saw that for the complex work IAE oversees, Smartsheet offered a better solution for integrating and structuring project data and enabling clear communication up the chain of command.

Customer:
Strack estimates that she and the four IAE directors who report to the assistant commissioner used to spend an average of 30 minutes a day manually compiling and sending emails to request updates or remind people of upcoming tasks. Those requests and updates are now automated through Smartsheet, saving 12.5 hours per week that equate to more than $70,000 per year based on hourly pay rates.

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We have our dashboards set up to refresh every three to five minutes. When I'm working with leadership and the screen will flash, I let them know that it's Smartsheet automatically grabbing new data and pulling it in for us; we don't even have to worry about it.

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Integrated Award Environment,
U.S. General Services Administration

"Smartsheet allows me to visualize my projects a lot better," Strack says. "It also allows me to maintain configuration management but allow other folks to come in. With previous tools like spreadsheets, I didn't have control over users who could work on the sheet without my knowledge, and I wasn't always notified. Or I could spend hours searching for something and never find it, but in Smartsheet where I think something should be is where I'll find it. It just flows naturally for me."

A platform that brings efficiency and order

IAE uses Smartsheet for oversight and tracking of a variety of federal projects, such as funded initiatives within ARPA-21. Strack was able to establish a single tracking number for ARPA-21 programs that can be followed and managed across the entire organization, replacing the previous system of using different tracking numbers at various stages of the project. For another project, Strack was able to bring information from thousands of disconnected spreadsheets into a single Smartsheet solution, providing clearer insights to leadership across the entire program.

When Strack joined IAE, 10 legacy platforms were in place to support the SAM.gov site, which provides a central portal for companies registering to do business with the federal government. A long-running migration project has brought that number down to seven, with work in progress to consolidate the system even further. Strack used WorkApps, a Smartsheet solution, to create dedicated workspaces for the teams that provide 24/7 support for those platforms, sending automated alerts for system issues that can be viewed on the team members' mobile devices for faster notification and response.

"By publishing our dashboards on WorkApps, we can give those teams instant access whenever they need it," Strack says. "And we can help them be productive even when individuals don't have a Smartsheet license or haven't gotten to upgrade yet."

In a Nutshell:

That time can also be spent working directly on projects, solving customer issues, or shortening response times for system issues. The ability to focus more attention on project development instead of administration helps work flow more efficiently.

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I am truly an out-of-the-box thinker. With Smartsheet I now have the ability to take the massive amount of information that we receive and present an entirely different picture. The puzzle still goes together, but the picture is now clearer. For someone like me who's neurodiverse, Smartsheet has provided an opportunity to present material and data in a totally different way than they've seen it before, and that has definitely strengthened my communication.

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Tracie D. Strack

Reporting is one of the most important uses for Smartsheet. Because dashboards are continually updated with real-time data, they provide an always-accurate view, making them a better foundation for briefings and presentations than a slide deck that's no longer sharing live information.

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Reclaiming half an hour a day adds up to real cost savings

Automated alerts save time, and time is money. Strack estimates that she and the four IAE directors who report to the assistant commissioner used to spend an average of 30 minutes a day manually compiling and sending emails to request updates or remind people of upcoming tasks. Those requests and updates are now automated through Smartsheet, saving 12.5 hours per week that equate to more than $70,000 per year based on hourly pay rates.

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Another benefit for the people engaged in projects is that Smartsheet enables visualization of project elements and data in ways that work best for each individual. This includes viewing tasks in card, grid, or Gantt view, as well as developing graphs and charts that apply new analytical frames to information to generate fresh insights.

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Stepping up to FedRAMP cloud security requirements

Strack is currently bridging two Smartsheet implementations: the original version of the platform, and the Smartsheet Gov version of the platform, which has been authorized by the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP). This means it passed FEDRAMP security assessment and authorization for cloud products and services, making it available for use by U.S. federal agencies.

Smartsheet is on schedule to provide full functionality including Resource Management, Control Center and more in the Smartsheet Gov environment, which Strack thinks will dramatically increase adoption and uptake at GSA and other federal offices.

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