



Operation Smile mobilizes more than 6,000 volunteers worldwide to provide safe surgery and training with Smartsheet

Operation Smile has provided hundreds of thousands of patients with safe surgical and dental care. With four decades of delivering world-class surgical programs and cleft care, the organization engages public-private partnerships to advance health care delivery, train local medical professionals to provide surgical care for patients in their communities, donate crucial medical equipment and supplies, and increase access to surgical care so that everyone living with a cleft condition is treated.

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Sean Riordan, Associate Vice President of IT at Operation Smile

Operation  Smile

Customer:

Operation Smile

Industry:

Nonprofit

Organization Size:

Medium (50-999 employees)

Region:

Global

Website:

operationsmile.org

Since 1982, Operation Smile has provided care to hundreds of thousands of patients worldwide by performing safe cleft surgeries and providing comprehensive health care. One of the world's largest volunteer-driven surgical nonprofit organizations, Operation Smile relies on more than 6,000 medical volunteers from across 67 countries to deliver safe surgery and training programs across the globe, advocating for the importance of safe surgery in resource-poor environments. *"We want to help as many people as possible, and our goal is to improve the quality of healthcare through our surgical programs by providing medical professionals with training, education, supplies, and equipment,"* says Sean Riordan, associate vice president of IT for Operation Smile.

Background

When Riordan began his role several years ago, he was tasked with bringing the organization into a new era of digital transformation. This goal was challenging because Operation Smile relied heavily on paper, spreadsheets, and email to track field staffing schedules and budgets. The organization also used the Monday.com cloud platform for project management, which didn't allow employees to dig deeply into projects. *"We had multiple templates and didn't have the most updated data,"* he says. *"We also had limitations because of the sheer volume of data for global planning and budgets. It took a lot of manual effort to look at 40,000 rows of data and break it down into smaller categories for a project."*

With manual processes and disparate tools, Operational Smile lacked visibility into its programs in the field. *"Our programs and number of volunteers are updated frequently, and we didn't have a good way of seeing what would happen to a program if a data had to change,"* says Riordan. *"We tried to take screenshots to put together reports for our leadership team, but that was not efficient at all."*

The organization sought to solve its problems by implementing software to help collect data in one place for better consistency and visibility. However, any new software had to be deployed quickly and easily. *"In IT, we're supporting staff and volunteers in different countries every day, and we can't just stop what we're doing to work on implementing a new tech stack,"* Riordan says. *"We had to do this in*

Customer:

To help design and build the new tool, Operation Smile worked with Smartsheet Professional Services teams.



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the simplest way, which was also important because our staff members in different regions don't always have the same technical ability in terms of learning something new."

Solution

Operation Smile initially adopted Smartsheet to help its marketing team manage internal branding and marketing projects. More recently, the organization decided to use Smartsheet as its primary project management tool, replacing Monday.com. To help design and build the new tool, Operation Smile worked with Smartsheet Professional Services teams. *"Smartsheet is very easy to use, but we needed to understand how we could use some of the more complex features,"* says Riordan. *"Smartsheet Professional Services was invaluable in terms of helping us build a solution and get it up and running fast. They took a project we thought would take us a month and reduced that down to a few days. They clearly understood our business case, and they were accessible, flexible, and available throughout the engagement."*

Operation Smile also received extensive training support from Smartsheet Professional Services during the rollout of the solution. *"Professional Services not only built the solution, but also onboarded our end users and trained our teams,"* Riordan says. *"This resulted in a solution our users felt empowered to use immediately."*

Smartsheet Professional Services helped create a programmatic list for planning and review. Employees and volunteers in different countries can access a Smartsheet master sheet to enter updated data on surgical programs and non-surgical programs such as nutrition and speech pathology. *"We have updated dates on the number of volunteers needed for a program, as well as how many people are projected to help,"* says Riordan. *"This data is updated every day, automatically."*

Operation Smile uses Smartsheet features including Dynamic View and Conditional formatting to track the status of projects within specific programs. The organization uses automated workflows in Smartsheet to monitor any issues with each project. *"If something's going on that will delay*

In a Nutshell:

Operation Smile is using Smartsheet to get consolidated, near real-time data and present it to employees and leadership teams every day.

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programmatic operations and possibly impact medical quality or our volunteers, notifications are automatically sent to the right person to take action,” says Riordan.

Using traffic lights (red, yellow, and green) to track the status of projects in Smartsheet, Operation Smile can quickly highlight any changes to a project’s schedule, such as dates or volunteers needed. In addition, the organization relies on Smartsheet dashboards to summarize program status and planned activities for leadership teams. *“We can now help our leaders see if we’re on track to hit milestones, and what plans we have in place in case we’re off track,” says Riordan. “We didn’t really have that ability before.”*

Efficient global volunteer mobilization through consistent, updated data

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With accurate data, Operation Smile can better plan how to utilize staff and volunteers for its surgery and training programs. *“We work in many countries, and there are potential health, environmental, and even political impacts,” says Riordan. “These issues can cause our programs to either not happen or get delayed. Smartsheet allows us to track these issues closely, so we can more effectively plan how to best mobilize our volunteers in different countries.”*

More time for surgical programs

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Better access to program data has reduced meeting time for our program activity teams. Each week, they meet to go through each program to ensure it’s on track or determine what to do if things are pushed back. This meeting was at least one hour long, and it’s only 30 minutes now, because the reports are right there in the dashboard.

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program activity teams," says Riordan. "Each week, they meet to go through each program to ensure it's on track or determine what to do if things are pushed back. This meeting was at least one hour long, and it's only 30 minutes now, because the reports are right there in the dashboard. Once we roll the dashboards out to more teams, I'd estimate our planning process will be 30 percent faster." With more time on their hands, Operation Smile teams can focus more on delivering medical programs in different countries.

Support for a DevOps approach in IT

The organization's IT team has taken advantage of the fact that Smartsheet is a low-code solution, which helps IT iterate and solve problems quickly. This has enabled a new DevOps model in IT, where IT integrates development and operations to be more agile. "Previously, we did a lot of standard IT things like help desk computer fixes," Riordan says. "Now, we have the ability to support a DevOps approach, which helps us respond to internal requests faster. As IT, we have more visibility than before, and people throughout the organization are asking for more projects. This ultimately helps us better support our digital transformation."

Operation Smile plans to implement additional Smartsheet features such as Control Center to further streamline project and program management. "One of our next projects is developing a health and safety tracker, which will help us make better decisions about what we're doing in regions with health-related challenges," says Riordan. "We are confident that Smartsheet is the tool to take us into the future."

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