LiquidPlanner® + Tensar.

Using Organizational Alchemy to Stay on Track

How Gina Rosen and Tensar International Use LiquidPlanner to Communicate and Collaborate

Tensar International's best-of-class ground stabilization products and design expertise are in demand in many infrastructure sectors, including roadways, airports, rail, utilities, and marine. The multinational firm is often managing many large projects at once, so many that in May 2016 it hired Gina Rosen, PMP, as director of the project management office and—not coincidentally—committed to LiquidPlanner as its project management solution.

"I practically made it a condition of employment," says Rosen, smiling. "I came from another firm where I used LiquidPlanner and credit it with getting a very large ERP implementation back on track—I knew it was just what we needed at Tensar."

As the new "project manager of project managers" at Tensar, Rosen knew she needed insight into the performance of multiple projects involving globally distributed teams and resources, while also implementing large customer relationship management (CRM) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) projects of her own. She knew from previous experience that several features of LiquidPlanner made it an excellent fit for her work at Tensar, particularly predictive scheduling, collaborative communication, and powerful visuals, such as dashboards.

Predictive Scheduling

"For me, predictive scheduling is the number one benefit, and it's also unique to LiquidPlanner—no other solution has anything like the strength of that feature," Rosen says.

"Almost immediately, I was able to secure funding approval for two additional resources by putting project backlogs into LiquidPlanner and comparing outcomes to the use of a single resource. It was a great way to demonstrate the schedule and cost benefits of making this investment."

Predictive scheduling differs from the "pick-a-day" scheduling offered by most PM solutions because it relies on estimated ranges of effort, resource capacity, and prioritization to predict finish dates for tasks and projects.

Put another way, finish dates aren't goals. They're predictions—predictions based on hard data, predictions that become more accurate as projects progress and more data comes in. And, based on the tracking and dynamic projection of resource utilization and other project information (including team member estimates), managers are able to adjust the priority of tasks and resources, predict the effect of adjusted priorities, and use these predictions to set and meet goals.

"I use it every day," Rosen says. The feature is particularly helpful given the global nature of Tensar teams. Since project work tends to be time shifted within teams, meetings and phone calls by Rosen or managers are not an effective way to keep track of project milestones. With predictive scheduling, it's possible to immediately see the effect of each day's work and to easily reset task priorities and resource allocation as needed to stay on track.

Collaborative Communication

"I came up on the infrastructure side of things, so my

experience is with infrastructure-related projects, which are not as long term," says Chad Heath, global director of IT. "With that background, I think LiquidPlanner's collaboration is one of the best features for our work."

LiquidPlanner improves Tensar's collaboration with several strategies, including shared project workspaces, a single source for all project information, and the transfer of vital project information out of email and into more accessible formats.

"The central project platform is now LiquidPlanner, not email, and that's great for us," Heath explains. "Email is the easy way, but it's lazy, and digging through email threads is tedious. The automation that takes information directly into LiquidPlanner has made a big difference for our teams."

Rosen appreciates the real-time feel of the collaboration. "It's 'Twitter-esque,' if you will," she says. "At my LiquidPlanner home page, I can catch up on work that happened overnight and see current activities as they're happening. And, I can comment directly and immediately, and those comments become part of the project. That makes the project more transparent to the entire team and definitely reduces the number of meetings needed. I love it."

All teams collaborate—that's the definition of a team. Superior collaboration makes for great teams.

Powerfully Visual

"Every month I have to write an update for our steering committee, and it includes a report on resource allocation and usage," says Rosen. "If I was working with spreadsheets, or something less visual than LiquidPlanner, that would be a very hard report to generate. But with LiquidPlanner, it's easy—I take it 100% from the LiquidPlanner dashboard, and I'm done."

Heath agrees that LiquidPlanner's strongly visual approach to data analysis is extremely helpful. "I'm very visual," he says.

Dashboards are a very powerful way to know what's going on with projects.

"Dashboards are a very powerful way for me to know what's going on with projects, and the best way I know to create presentations for the executives that I report to. It's easy to make dashboards with the exact information I need—I can very quickly create them on the fly. There's really no comparison to Excel or some of the other tools we've tried."

To some extent, good project management has always relied on visual presentations like the Gantt chart. LiquidPlanner goes beyond traditional tools by simplifying and streamlining data presentation, making it very easy to create custom presentations that serve a project manager's exact needs.

For example, a dashboard can be modified with customizable "widgets" (charts, comment fields, images, etc.), custom filters, and secure sharing with particular stakeholders. Visual presentation itself isn't unique to LiquidPlanner; however, the powerful focus on visual learners and the way they work is. Heath's and Rosen's immediate use of LiquidPlanner's excellent graphic tools is an example of this.

Rosen styles herself an "organizational alchemist" with a pragmatic and flexible approach to project management. Bringing LiquidPlanner to Tensar was a good example of this, as it's a flexible and effective PM tool that makes her work easier, but Heath says LiquidPlanner has also been a good fit for the entire firm.

"We've tried a lot of approaches and solutions here, but nothing seemed to stick. Before Gina came on, we were relying basically on Excel," he says. "LiquidPlanner has been different; it's the first solution that works for top-level managers and has seen substantial buy-in across the board. It's going to be helping us for a long time."

Contact Us

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