Visio Customer Solution Case Study

Visio

Manufacturer Uses Diagramming Solution to Create Process Documents 60 Percent Faster

Overview
Company: ABB Switzerland
Country or Region: Switzerland
Industry: Power and utilities

Company Profile
The ABB Group is a global leader in power and automation technologies. Based in Zurich, Switzerland, the company employs 145,000 people and maintains seven corporate research centers.

Business Situation
The company sought a solution that combined easy-to-use diagramming and collaboration features with support for both Event-driven Process Chain (EPC) and Business Process Modeling Notation (BPMN) 2.0.

Solution
ABB Switzerland deployed Microsoft Visio Professional 2013. The company now takes advantage of an expanded array of templates, themes, and collaboration features to create diagrams more quickly.

Benefits
- Accelerated compliance with BPMN 2.0 standard
- 60 percent faster completion of diagrams
- Reduced costs with a single solution that supports EPC and BPMN 2.0 standards

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Bernd Schachinger, Head of Processes and Quality Assurance, ABB Switzerland

As part of its continuous effort to increase efficiency, ABB Switzerland—which provides industrial power and automation products—searched for a new process diagramming solution. Specifically, the company needed an application that provided support for both the Event-driven Process Chain (EPC) and Business Process Modeling Notation (BPMN) 2.0 standards. ABB Switzerland executives were eager to evaluate the latest release of Microsoft Visio. They sought to take advantage of numerous product enhancements designed to make it easier to create and share diagrams. After participating in an early adoption program for the technology, the company deployed Visio Professional 2013. ABB Switzerland now uses Visio 2013, together with Microsoft SharePoint Server 2013 to enable employees to collaboratively create BPMN 2.0-compliant diagrams—60 percent faster than before.

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Situation

The ABB Group is a global provider of electrical power and industrial automation products. Based in Switzerland, the company's subsidiaries operate in approximately 100 countries.

Throughout its rich history, which spans more than 130 years, ABB has demonstrated a passion for finding new and more efficient ways to develop and enhance its products. At the heart of its success is its disciplined approach to continuously refining business processes across its global supply chain.

For more than a decade, the company's headquarters in Switzerland has used Microsoft Visio drawing and diagramming software to document internal processes. ABB Switzerland has taken full advantage of a series of innovations in Visio functionality over the years, including support for Event-driven Process Chain notation, the ability to create data-connected diagrams, and interoperability with Microsoft SharePoint Server services.

To improve process standardization and democratize business process management efforts, managers at ABB Switzerland wanted to make it easier for more employees to create, edit, publish, and share process diagrams. To reach this goal, company leaders sought a solution that would enable staff in any department to create highly professional looking diagrams with vivid effects and shapes—all in less time. ABB Switzerland also wanted to promote more collaboration among colleagues in the development of diagrams. Executives believed that this would help avoid duplication of work, reduce the risk of errors that sometimes occurred when multiple authors attempted to merge changes made in separate Visio files, and

significantly reduce the time required to create diagrams.

Further, ABB Switzerland recently adopted Business Process Modeling Notation (BPMN) 2.0 to augment its use of EPC notation. Released in 2010, BPMN 2.0 introduces a multitude of new event types, tasks, and corresponding shapes. The objective of the standard is to provide notation readily understandable by all stakeholders. ABB needed one diagramming tool that would support the updated version of this notation standard, as well as the EPC method, so that it could deliver on the requirements of any customer.

Solution

Because ABB Switzerland has used Microsoft Visio drawing and diagramming software for more than a decade, executives were interested in exploring improvements to functionality in the latest release of the software. "We wanted to stay with Visio because it has become such an important part of our process management infrastructure over the years," says Bernd Schachinger, Head of Processes and Quality Assurance at ABB Switzerland.

Before deploying Visio Professional 2013 and Microsoft SharePoint Server 2013, ABB Switzerland was eager to test the compatibility of a number of its custom-developed applications, which were based on Visio 2010. Executives also wanted to evaluate new features, such as support for BPMN 2.0, metadata, workflows, versioning, and commenting. Further, they wanted to explore the enhanced storage and collaboration capabilities offered through SharePoint Server 2013 and Visio Services 2013. These improvements enable employees to more easily track the development and ongoing optimization of process diagrams.

Bernd Schachinger
Head of Processes and Quality
Assurance, ABB Switzerland

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"We heard a lot of good things about Visio 2013 and we were excited to try the new features in our environment to make sure everything worked the way we wanted it to," says Schachinger. In mid-2012, ABB Switzerland seized an opportunity to participate in the prerelease preview program for the technology.

With help from Germany-based oneAssist, a member of the Microsoft Partner Network with Silver competencies, ABB Switzerland deployed Visio Professional 2013 to 120 people across three teams: the IT services team, the SharePoint team, and the processes team. Team members have since been able to save time while creating customized diagrams that link to business data, adhere to the latest standards, and look even more vibrant and professional than the ones they created with older versions of the product. "Staff members marveled at how they could design a diagram in minutes that not only worked well, but that looked very modern and cool," says Senaj Lelic, Managing Director at oneAssist.

In the course of building new process diagrams, workflows, and organizational charts, staff members at ABB Switzerland have extensively used the commenting feature in Visio 2013, which provides a precise view of the workflow and enhances collaboration. "People can add their comments to a single working file—either by using the Visio 2013 application or through a browser when the diagram is published using Visio Services in SharePoint Server," says Schachinger. "This means we can capture input from a large number of people and still keep the product development process moving forward quickly."

The company also takes advantage of the modeling capabilities available in Visio

2013 and Microsoft SharePoint Designer 2013 to deliver workflows. The Visio 2013 model also contains embedded and consistently stored workflow metadata as well as improved backup facilities. "You store data and workflows in Visio 2013 and can go to a SharePoint site, extract the workflow, and get a diagram of all the metadata of the workflow," says Schachinger. "Then you can just publish the workflow on SharePoint."

Benefits

By upgrading to Microsoft Visio 2013, ABB Switzerland has gained a number of enhanced capabilities for collaborating, documenting, and standardizing business process—while minimizing the cost and complexity to achieve these goals. Specifically, the company:

Gains Cost-Efficient Compliance with Industry Standard Notation
One of the chief requirements that ABB Switzerland had in selecting a new diagramming solution was that it incorporated the BPMN 2.0 standard. Through its adoption of Visio 2013, ABB Switzerland gained support for this updated format, and it benefits from the use of familiar technology that interoperates well with its other Microsoft technology investments, including SharePoint 2013. "Choosing any other process modeling application would have required weeks in training time," says Schachinger. "Once we saw that Visio 2013 supported BPMN 2.0, it was an easy choice to make."

Creates Diagrams 60 Percent Faster and Avoids Costs
By taking advantage of powerful and easy-to-use features such as the ability to comment on a diagram (from within the application or through a browser), an expanded library of stencils and shapes,

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Figure 1—ABB Switzerland uses new tools in Microsoft Visio 2013 to create professional-looking process diagrams in less time.

and workflow metadata, ABB Switzerland staff members spend less time creating diagrams, require no training, and avoid employing a fragmented set of tools to complete a deliverable. They also use the commenting feature, together with document management functionality in SharePoint Server 2013, to work collaboratively on a single Visio file, instead of using lengthy email chains to convey feedback. In total, ABB Switzerland estimates that it is now able to shorten the development time for a single diagram from five to two business days, an efficiency gain of 60 percent.

Also, with the ability to consolidate on a single solution to meet diagram standards, ABB Switzerland substantially reduces licensing and maintenance costs, and avoids the need to train employees on multiple tools.
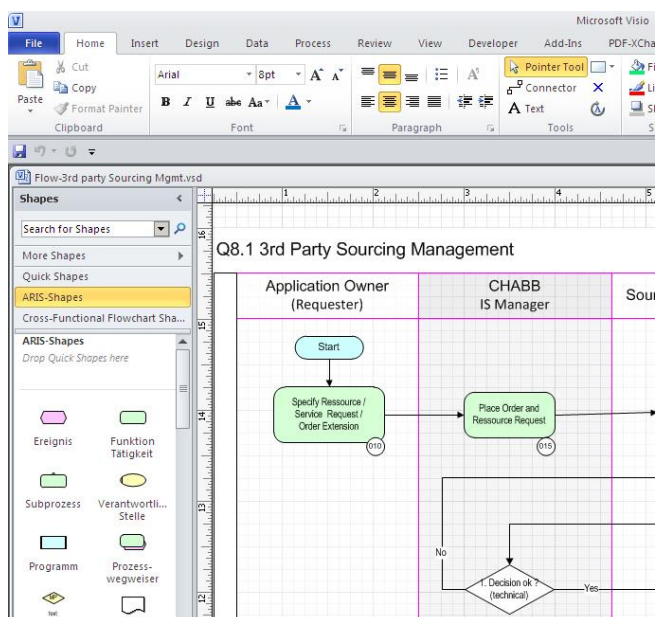
Strengthens Business Process Adoption
Executives are confident that, with the ability to more vividly communicate process flows and other information through the use of Visio 2013, they can accelerate companywide adoption of important operational changes. "At ABB, we have found that teamwork is a key ingredient for our continued success," says Schachinger. "And Visio Professional 2013 creates opportunities for teams to easily model process diagrams."

Enhances Process Diagrams
Thanks to Visio 2013 tools, ABB Switzerland process diagrams are standardized, good looking, and well documented. Because the tool works so well, user acceptance is high and that's important to the company's success. "These diagrams look very modern and you can create effects within seconds," says Schachinger. "This gives us great possibilities to fulfill all of our needs with just one tool. It's very easy to love Visio 2013. Our customers are very happy. Everyone is happy."

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Visio

The new Visio makes it easier than ever to create and share professional, versatile diagrams that simplify complex information. It includes updated shapes, templates, and styles, as well as enhanced support for teams, including the ability for several people to work on a single diagram at the same time.

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