



ESRI Sees Increased Productivity with Clarizen's "Culturally Changing" Work Management Solution

[ESRI](#) designs and develops the world's leading geographic information system (GIS) technology. GIS allows people to view, understand, question, interpret and visualize data in many ways that reveal relationships, patterns and trends in the form of maps, globes, reports and charts. A market leader in GIS for more than 30 years, ESRI's business philosophy is to focus on being effective and delivering value.

ESRI structures its projects within a collaborative work environment and encourages employees to work together to guide a project along, bring ideas together and deliver a successful solution. The Business Products team is comprised of 50 people across eleven cities and thirteen time zones.

Project Managers (PMs) on this team need to communicate effectively with each other and their teams to meet deadlines and deliver products on time. They wanted software that would help them avoid a common pitfall among PMs. ESRI understood that having a plan is one thing, but executing on it is another. Even the most well-intentioned, skillful and experienced PMs can fall prey to spending tons of time and resources on creating a plan and then, for numerous reasons, failing to follow and execute on the plan effectively and efficiently.

The ESRI Business Products team recognized that their current mix of project management approaches limited their team's potential so they started researching more collaborative options like Clarizen. They knew their search was over when they came across [Clarizen's project execution Software-as-a-Service](#) (SaaS) solution and overall project philosophy. ESRI was attracted to Clarizen and ultimately chose it because Clarizen's "execution" focus fit well with ESRI's commitment to effective, valuable work processes. Furthermore, they were sold on the features and functionality that Clarizen included in order to ensure team's follow the plans that they spend time creating.

ESRI distributes its Clarizen licenses among the project leads, who are the only ones who really need to see and manage the plan. The rest of the team receives email updates pertaining to their activities. With multiple projects going on simultaneously among team members in offices across the country, this feature facilitates clear communication on deliverables and deadlines without overwhelming the team with details that do not pertain to them.

Clarizen's "Roadmap" feature allows PMs to easily monitor the status of the project with a real-time view of where items stand, behind or ahead of schedule. This allows ESRI to be nimble and alter the plan as needed. By inputting and tracking the milestones of each phase of the project in the Roadmap, the team is keenly focused on each step, helping create and follow a meaningful plan.

The actual training on the software was easy for the ESRI team, but shifting the team's mindset and practice of using it took slightly longer. Jim Herries, Program Manager of Business Products and Darren Cook, Project Manager at ESRI, explained to the team how the software would make their lives easier. They took time to discuss how the software enables communication and task completion accountability.

"We are a small team, with developers in three countries and management a short walk away. We knew more visibility into projects' status would have an immediate impact on our team's culture," said Jim Herries, "But once people realized how simple it is to define their plan and keep it updated, the team's confidence and communications noticeably improved."

As their team started using Clarizen, they no longer needed to spend time convincing people of the benefits because they became apparent.



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Since February 2009 when the Business Products team started using Clarizen, their level of team effectiveness has improved drastically. Now PMs and team leads structure their meetings around the Clarizen tool, which helps them remain focused on primary issues and not get sidetracked by updating status items. Particularly, the PMs benefit from the scalability of the interface, allowing them to see issues and delays in a mere glance.

Prior to Clarizen, the team wasted a lot of time calling and emailing about the status of different projects. With Clarizen, this is not needed, freeing more time up for solving the actual problems. They can find out in a matter of seconds what is behind schedule. This level of accountability has improved meetings exponentially. No one likes to see their name with red delay signs next to it – using the Clarizen plan ensures that the work is getting done, which allows for more meaningful discussions and results from everyone, even when people are not at the actual meeting.

ESRI feels that one of Clarizen's most powerful features is its availability from any web browser, allowing project managers and leads to communicate, update, add tasks, etc., from anywhere in the world. Being a SaaS provider themselves, ESRI needed no convincing on the benefits of this technology. In fact, the solution's ubiquity was a major selling point.

With Clarizen, ESRI's Business Products team demonstrates ROI to management in a number of ways. Because they are able to focus less on updating their team and more on developing products, the team hits its dates, with higher quality and fewer distractions than before. Because of this, the team is pleased and clearly working more efficiently because the projects are going much better overall. Even those who were skeptical about using the tool at first are now eager to use it.

"Clarizen's SaaS solution was a culture changing product for this team," said Earl Nordstrand, Manager of the Business Products team. "By using Clarizen and significantly improving the quality of our meetings, our team makes better use of their time, allowing project managers and leads to guide the team better, faster and cheaper. We log into the solution an average of five times a day – this shows you how much the team relies on this software to get their jobs done."