

Customer
Success Story

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Solutions



Georgia Power

Georgia Power Maximizes the Value of Its Technology Investments with Autodesk MapGuide

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—Mary H. Adams,
Georgia Power

THE CHALLENGE

Serving over two million customers, Georgia Power is the largest of the five electric utilities that make up Southern Company, one of the leading producers and distributors of electricity in the United States. Georgia Power has long made delivering exceptional service and value to customers its top priorities, and its power rates are 15 percent below the national average. But because service and value mean more than just low rates, the company is constantly looking for new ways to increase productivity, control costs, and deliver better service. Since turning to Autodesk MapGuide® and Oracle® database technology, Georgia Power is using its valuable GIS (geographic information system) data to achieve those goals.

Integration Erases Boundaries

The company was an early adopter of digital map technology, converting all its paper maps in the late 1980s. Today, the company has over 110,000 system infrastructure maps stored in its Oracle 9i database, and, just as significantly, it is linking that information with other critical internal systems and making it available over the Internet using Autodesk MapGuide. "We put Oracle, with its cost-effective open data model, together with the functionality of Autodesk MapGuide," says Mary H. Adams, Georgia Power's GIS project lead and senior distribution support specialist. "We're erasing the lines between systems so our employees can get their jobs done more effectively."

Valuable Data Trapped in Disparate Systems

Only Georgia Power's designers and engineers had access to the company's GIS data before the company implemented Autodesk MapGuide. They could access maps to perform design work and make updates using Autodesk Map. But when employees in other departments, including lighting, customer service, and even marketing, needed location-based information, the data was only available in a tabular format. And if employees wanted to cross-reference the information with other data, such as power usage data or equipment age, the disparate data sets had to be reconciled manually.

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"In the power industry, much of the information we generate and use has geographic elements to it," notes Adams. "Our employees were spending too much time querying different applications to get the information they needed."

The company maintains 52 operating centers throughout the state of Georgia, and the field crews who maintain the company's infrastructure are based out of those centers. Without ready access to GIS information in its operating centers, the company found it difficult to maximize the return on its investment in its outage management system (OMS). Managers in the centers only had access to the information the OMS generated in a tabular format. It was a time-consuming task to determine where a piece of faulty equipment was located, slowing response times to power outage problems and decreasing customer satisfaction. According to Adams, "Once a manager determined where equipment was located, it took additional time to see what other equipment was in the area. Our operating center managers needed more GIS information at their fingertips. By giving it to them, we saw an opportunity to improve our outage frequency and duration metrics."

THE SOLUTION

Replacing Tabular Data with Dynamic Maps

Georgia Power turned to Autodesk MapGuide to unlock its GIS data. At the same time, it implemented NaviGate software from Gatekeeper Systems. Because NaviGate came with an interface and functionality designed especially for utilities, it enabled Georgia Power to maximize its usage of Autodesk MapGuide quickly. "NaviGate is an off-the-shelf application, which allows even large customers, such as Georgia Power, to be operational in a relatively short time," explains Philip Naecker, chief scientist with Gatekeeper Systems. "We have been able to develop a wide-array of light-

weight, easy-to-use applications with Autodesk MapGuide. To use it, our customers don't have to use a particular GIS vendor's software or data."

With Autodesk MapGuide in place, Georgia Power employees are able to view data from multiple databases and operational systems on dynamically generated maps using only a web browser. The data is coming out of systems as diverse as its customer relationship management (CRM) system and its outage management system. Of course, the geospatial data being used to build the maps is coming from the GIS database the company stores in its Oracle 9i database. To make it easier to manage its spatial data, Georgia Power uses Oracle Locator, a GIS data management tool that is a part of the Oracle Spatial suite of products. "Autodesk MapGuide works extremely well with our Oracle and Oracle Locator database as well as data coming out of our other systems," says Adams. "Using only a street or customer name, an employee can find account, equipment, and outage information. All the information is displayed on an easy-to-read map, and employees no longer have to waste time querying multiple databases."

Since integrating Autodesk MapGuide with its outage management system, Georgia Power has been able to improve the way it manages power outages by giving each of its operating centers fast, clear access to outage information. Managers in the company's operating centers can now quickly view outage and bypass information through their web browsers. "Managers simply check for system changes every morning using Autodesk MapGuide," explains Adams. "Any changes or items that need their attention are clearly visible on a map. By clicking on the item, they get detailed notes about what occurred. It is much quicker than having to hunt through tabular OMS reports to get an idea of what happened."

THE RESULT

More IT for Less Money and Improving Critical Processes

Being able to view critical information on maps is saving employees at Georgia Power an incredible amount of time. In fact, the system is so easy to enhance and use that Adams is faced with an entirely new GIS challenge. She says, "We're able to add new functionality so quickly that it is a struggle to keep everyone up-to-date about what they can do with the system. Technology with an open data model, such as Oracle, Autodesk MapGuide, and NaviGate, is easy to utilize and integrate with other systems. This impacts our business so dramatically that it is difficult to quantify, but it's a very big cost savings for us."

Given Georgia Power's commitment to exceptional service, it's not surprising that the company is especially pleased with the impact Autodesk MapGuide has had on its outage management processes. "The fact that Autodesk MapGuide gives us a fast and cost-effective way to link and deliver OMS and GIS information helps managers spot and respond to our customers' problems faster," says Adams. "Our outage frequency and duration metrics have improved significantly in recent years. Autodesk MapGuide has definitely contributed to our success."



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