Social Media and the G20: How Canada Modernized International Meetings

First-ever use of secure social collaboration software from OpenText eliminated barriers and enabled G20 Summit world leaders to work effectively together in preparation for the Summit

Industry

Government

Organization

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), Summits Management Office

Business Challenge

- Collaboration on policy issues and negotiations was done via outdated technologies such as the telephone or email

- Needed a secure network for use prior to the event so the delegates could store and share content

- Security issues surrounding email

- Given the heightened focus on security and privacy around the world, G20 organizers avoided use of social media tools that lacked enterprise-strength security controls

Business Solution

OpenText Social Workplace

Business Benefits

- Users have one central repository for capturing, sharing, and preserving knowledge

- Social media offers a more productive environment than email for effective communication

- OpenText Social Workplace met three key requirements: security, organization, and convenience

- Communities facilitate collaboration, organization, aggregation, and iteration of information

- Solution is easy to deploy and minimal training is required

For the first time in the history of G20 Summits, policy makers from around the world were able to work together over secure social collaboration and productivity software in advance of and during the G20 Toronto Summit. A secure, collaborative, and community-based environment was created by OpenText to enhance the sharing of government leaders' stance on important world financial issues. The shared workspace supported multiple languages to enhance the ability of delegates to come together across time, geographical, political, and organizational barriers to communicate more productively.

Background

The main focus of the G20 multilateral events is global fiscal planning and management in an effort to stabilize the world's economy. The Summits bring together the heads of state of the world's advanced and emerging economies in order to help regulate and manage the world's financial sectors, discuss related development topics, and ensure financial security.

Organizations and participants in such events have typically collaborated on policy issues and negotiations via outdated technologies such as the telephone or email or in person during these summits, which by then, was often too late. The world is a big place and connecting with people in the months leading up to such a large Summit often proves difficult and sometimes even impossible. Simply put, no other field within the public sector was in greater need of a shift in how it conducted its outreach and communications than the global public sector and no other sector could benefit more than this one in adopting social media practices.

Given the heightened focus on security and privacy around the world, G20 organizers avoided use of consumer-grade social media tools, which lack enterprise-strength security controls. At the same time, social media offers a more productive environment for developing the agenda and various issue papers that normally are extremely difficult to produce via complex email trails. Clearly, a solution that combines the benefits without the risk was needed.

The OpenText solution: Working more effectively together

The G20 needed to quickly and efficiently adopt social media practices, with minimal impact on time, resources, habits, and schedules of the organizing committee. To this end, a partnership was struck between the Canadian Digital Media Network (CDMN), a federally funded network representing most major Canadian technology firms, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), which was ultimately responsible for the G20 Summit and its execution. CDMN member OpenText provided a hosted social media platform—a virtual G20 site—via a variety of mobile platforms and the Internet.

Using Social Media to Support Multilingual Dialogue

DFAIT's Summits Management Office provided the business context and framework to engage all participating countries as well as their executive management teams attending the Summit.

In preparing for the G20, the Summits Management Office considered developing a secure network for use prior to the event. This network would allow delegates to store and share content such as policy development, logistics, and agenda items. After learning about OpenText Social Workplace, it was clear that this solution would be a natural fit. The OpenText platform met three key requirements: security, organization, and convenience.

This initiative was truly the first of its kind: the leadership and government employees of all 20 countries participating on a social media site. All participants had online profiles, and all were from different backgrounds. For the first time ever, the world's governments were online in one platform engaging in global fiscal planning.

Letting the ideas and content flow

The Summits Management Office launched The Virtual G20 three months prior to the June 26 event, allowing senior policy makers and other officials representing G20 countries to begin sharing materials. This way, when the Summit got under way, issues and perspectives had already been shared over the secure network.

It was at a Sherpa meeting in Ottawa where the VG20 officially launched. This provided the Summits Management Office with a couple of advantages. Most of the users—Sherpas, Sherpa assistants, and their support staff—were in Ottawa on that date. The networking application was presented to the Sherpa assistants. Then, a presentation was made to the Sherpas.

One of the key strengths of Social Workplace is the speed of deployment. From the first meeting between the Summits Management Office and OpenText to deployment was approximately one month.

The G20 Summit participants who used the OpenText social collaboration solution reported that it required minimal training and provided an intuitive Web browser experience tailored to their needs. One hundred and twenty-five participants had an account in the community-based network. Ease of use played an important role in gaining this level of user participation and was a key benefit.

Social Workplace brings together all of the social tools that have defined the modern Internet into a safe, organizational framework. The Profiles feature automatically generates a rich, descriptive profile for every user. Users can edit their own profiles, add a photo, update their status, and view other people's profiles.

A new form of information exchange

DFAIT's Summits Management Office worked closely with the Canadian policy team to promote the application. They had a champion on the team that really liked the idea of a virtual G20 and promoted it by uploading specific documents only available through virtual G20 and did not email those documents in the traditional sense.

With the OpenText system, all the documents can be accessed at any time, a capability that was appreciated by the invitee countries like Spain, Vietnam, and Netherlands because it was the first time they were able to easily access content, which traditionally might have been more difficult for them since they're not in the room at the time.

OpenText support

OpenText provided 24-hour support and on-site training for the users. On the IT side, the biggest benefit for the Summits Management Office was having 24-hour support and a dedicated OpenText team that they could call on any time. The global network that OpenText offers was very advantageous because it is able to provide in-country support across 20 countries.

Conclusion

The Toronto G20 Summit has set the standard for what can be achieved within a public sector domain by leveraging the power of social media to generate collaboration amongst interested parties, seek out new contributors, and manage all the content associated to such multilateral events. The G20 collaborative workplace enabled the delegations to arrive at the conference better prepared, work more effectively, and capture more value from the meetings.

With the success of the G20 Toronto Summit, South Korea, the sponsor of the next G20 Summit, also plans to use the secure, social collaboration software for the meetings.

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