



Case Study



Silverbear was asked to design, develop and implement the Cheshire and Warrington Online Business Portal

Regional Online Business Portal

A regional approach to business and skills support is key to raising productivity, economic growth and employment levels. Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), Business Links, Chambers, Local Authorities, Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) and other stakeholders in the regional economic market place are recognising that only through collaboration and coordination can significant improvements in the business and skills economy be made.

The Cheshire and Warrington Economic Alliance (CEWA) have not only recognised this fact but have taken the bold move to develop and implement a single integrated business support system designed to bring together the products, services, channels and market intelligence of a number of economic, skills and business development organisations.

In January 2004 the CWEA, which comprises of; Cheshire County Council, Chester City Council, Chester & North Wales Chamber of Commerce, Cheshire Enterprise Agencies and Business Link Cheshire & Warrington, contracted with Silverbear to design, develop and implement the Cheshire and Warrington Online Business Portal (CWOB), a web based system, which brings together the partner's various client management systems into a single unified Portal database.

The aim of the project was to improve the mechanism for communication, cooperation and mutual support between the partners, while at the same time ensuring a consistent level of service to the business & skills community.

Through Silverbear's unique Corral integration platform, client activity can be tracked between partners with client information kept up to date within all partner systems as well as the Portal's hub database. This approach ensures all partners have the same accurate information to work on and that duplication of effort is avoided.

The key areas, which represented challenges for CWEA, were as follows:

Channel Management & Accessibility: 'Active Brokerage & no wrong door'

Business Links, Chambers, Local Authorities, LSCs, etc all provide a potentially conflicting and duplicating range of services to the business community. For the support network to effectively embrace active brokerage or 'no wrong door' the key players need to work together sharing their service portfolio and client knowledge. CWOB provides a central point for customers to access the range of services and products available through the CWEA partnership. CWOB also helps

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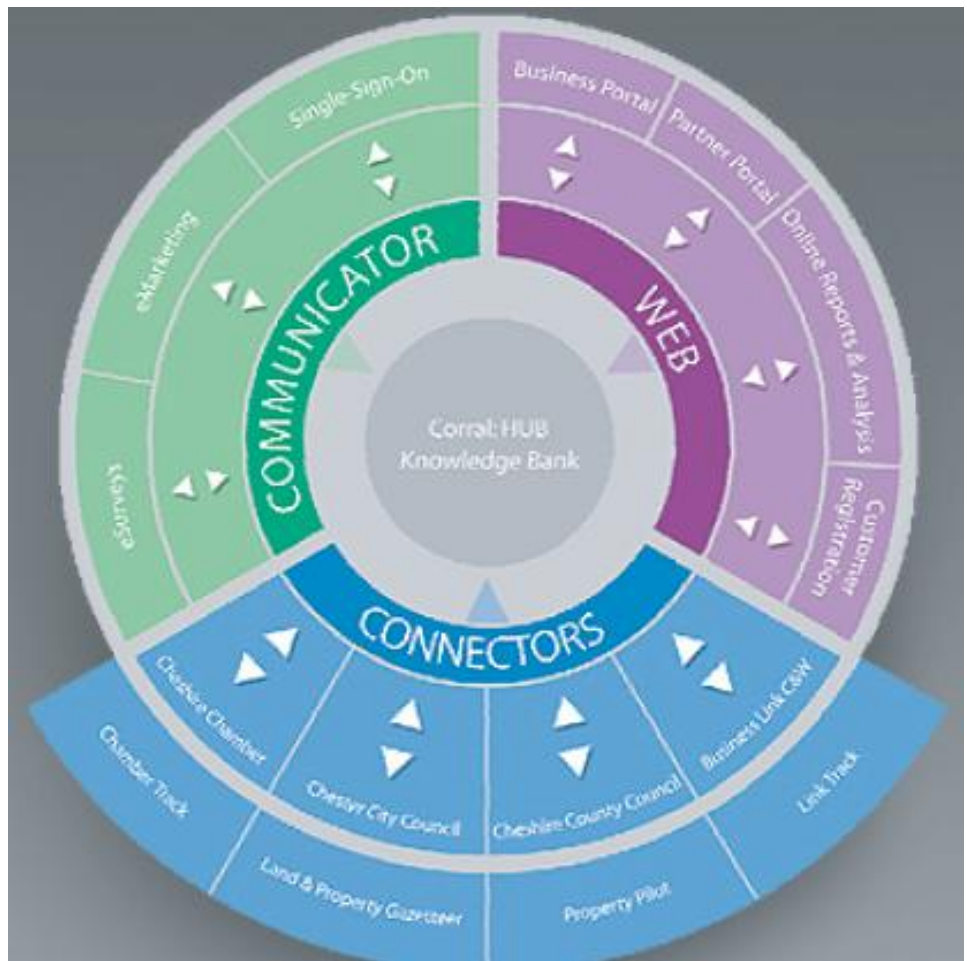
"We have been delighted at the work that has been done for us by Silverbear; they have helped us to realise our dreams by helping us to integrate our business systems enabling us to improve the way we deliver services and information to local businesses."

to facilitate the joint working and collaboration of the partners in tailoring their services to complement each other and, through analysis of customer interactions, produce products that are responsive to customer needs.

Intelligence: 'Understanding and Proactively Reacting to the SME Community'

To be able to offer customers the most appropriate services at the most appropriate time it is imperative to understand the market. As information is collected on customer's needs, wants and aspirations, this knowledge can be used to identify profiles, key sectors, growth trends and patterns. Learning styles and communication preferences are also key. This knowledge can then be used to proactively market services across the region.

The CWOB helps to ensure the right markets receive the right services from the most appropriate service providers. In subsequent phases of the project, this information will be made available cross the wider business and skills support community.



The Solution

The solution is simple and succinct: Silverbear's technology and business consultancy allows the CWEA partners to retain their hard-won working systems and yet work together in a cohesive and collaborative manner. CWOB consists of four main elements:

The business portal: provides information and online services from the partnership to the business community. Businesses and contacts are able to register in order to gain access to valuable resources/services provided by CWEA. It also provides CWEA an easy mechanism to deliver this information and knowledge to target services more effectively.

The Partner Portal: provides CWEA with access to the centralised hub database or knowledge bank and the ability to interrogate and report on the data for marketing, services development and economic analysis purposes.

Single Sign On: is designed to provide a single registration process for multiple sites. This negates the need to for users to have to register on multiple sites and allows users to access partner and third party sites providing a virtual 'no wrong door approach'.

Integrated Data Hub: provides a consolidated view of companies and contacts within the CWEA partnership and a mechanism to keep the hub and its spokes up-to-date. A comprehensive reconciliation application and synchronisation process ensures all data passed between partners and the hub is kept accurate and up to date.

The Benefits

- Unified and consistent view of the regional support network
- Increase in productivity, economic competitiveness and social inclusion
- Targeted customer relationship management
- Increase brand awareness
- Enablers for creativity & innovation
- Multiple Access points, with a coordinated gateway
- Removal of barriers to closer cooperation & collaboration within the network
- Knowledge sharing across the network
- Development of a common marketing strategy
- Ability to monitor & evaluate the network and delivery



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