

Osaka Gas

www.osakagas.co.jp

Summary

Osaka Gas is a leading energy supplier with its core natural gas supply business serving nearly 7 million customers in Japan's Kansai region. With a portfolio of diversified energy businesses, Osaka Gas is developing into a multi-energy services provider of natural gas, electricity, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), district heating and cooling, and other services. Including its affiliated enterprises, the Osaka Gas Group is also active in various non-energy business fields.

“

Our main goals were to achieve greater reliability and better cost management. Liferay accomplished that resoundingly.

Shigeru Nonami

Manager of Information & Communication Systems

Challenge

With its various business units and diverse portfolio of services, Osaka Gas was faced with the challenge of managing an abundance of data. The company's intranet aggregated not just content but a number of disparate applications, and it relied on a well-known commercial product portal system to do so. Over the course of eight years, however, users began to voice frustrations with the portal. Certain applications slowed the system, often leading to tedious reboots twice a week during business hours. Business users also complained about the abundance of links, which made it difficult to view information in a quick and simple way.

As it neared the end of its service contract, Osaka Gas was presented with two options. One was to improve the current system, which would involve either an upgrade to a newer version of the portal or a potentially expensive scale-up of its hardware. Since this commercial portal was tied to an enterprise suite of products, the upgrade did not appear to be a practical option as it would necessitate the replacement of the entire suite at once, which involved huge risk. Scaling was not a better option, either. Due to interdependencies with the hardware and operating system, Osaka Gas was reliant on installing hardware that had become out of date over time and eventually phased out of production.

Resolution

One last option was to replace the portal system. While this also involved some level of risk, with concerns about stability and cost, Liferay surfaced as an attractive and viable solution. As an open source product, Liferay would provide access to the source code as well as implementation resources; at a tenth of the price of most competitors, any questions regarding operational and management costs would also be laid to rest. After much deliberation, it was decided that replacing their system with Liferay Portal would be the best alternative.



As the primary integrator, Osaka Gas Information System Research Institute (OGIS) focused on integrating the Liferay cluster system and evaluating any possible fits and gaps between Liferay and the previous portal system. They were also tasked with installing the original portlets and assuming daily operations and maintenance.

Since Osaka Gas hosts over 25,000 enterprise users, it was wary of major overhauls to the user interface. Fortunately, Liferay's flexible theming solutions and adherence to open standards like JSR-168

allowed the company to update the back-end system with minimal disruption to user experience. What's more, open source software allowed them the stability they had previously lacked. "Our main goals were to achieve greater reliability and better cost management. Liferay accomplished that resoundingly," said Shigeru Nonami, Manager of Information & Communication Systems.

Osaka Gas is now reaping the benefits of Liferay Portal on a daily basis. Users are touting the utility derived from features such as granular management of roles and authorizations (pages and portlets), easy page layout customization, and ease of integration between Liferay and the company's original collaboration systems (BBS, Scheduler) via Web Services. Osaka Gas is now able to quickly scale this intranet (and intra-organization communication) to give its family of subsidiary companies direct access to information as well.

In the future, the company plans to explore options on how to expand their intranet, along with a possible update to increase system availability. For now, with its intranet portal in tow, Osaka Gas can focus on expanding its business and reaching broader populations with its various energy enterprises.