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Craig P. Grosinger
Vice President of Design
Panera Bread

Opening Doors

Bakery-Café Chain Slices the Time and Costs of Opening New Franchise Locations with Autodesk Buzzsaw Collaborative Project Management Solution

Project Summary

Panera Bread is the fastest growing bakery-café chain in the United States, selling its delicious artisan-crafted breads in more than 35 states. To keep up with the company's rapid expansion plans, Panera Bread sought a more efficient way to collaborate with architects and contractors. Traditional methods—such as printing out the construction documents and overnighting them—were fraught with delays and other complications that could prevent the doors of new locations from opening on time. Using the Autodesk Buzzsaw collaborative project management solution has allowed Panera Bread to:

- Target a 50% reduction in reimbursable costs related to printing and shipping of construction documents
- Decrease amount of time needed to bring a new location from the design phase to the construction phase
- Increase effectiveness of collaboration among Panera Bread design team and outside vendors and contractors
- Securely provide access to prototypical documents, architectural specifications, and other sensitive project data



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THE CHALLENGE

Taking Over America, One Loaf at a Time

Bread is the food of life. The very smell of it makes people feel at home anywhere, bringing them comfort and joy. Since 1981, bakery-café chain Panera Bread has used this simple truth as its guiding principle, bringing its artisan-crafted bread to consumers across America. The concept has certainly caught on with the public: Panera Bread currently operates 900 bakery-cafes in 37 states, with 150 new bakery-cafes targeted to open in 2006 to keep up with customer demand.

Effective Collaboration Required to Build New Locations

Maintaining this high trajectory growth—and making sure new locations are on schedule to open their doors for business—requires seamless planning and coordination between Panera Bread and a veritable army of architects, contractors, and vendors. Craig Grosinger, vice president of design for Panera Bread explained: “There are a lot of different parties involved in opening any given location. The importance of being able to share plans and specifications—and making sure everybody is on the same page—cannot be overstated.”

Unfortunately, conventional methods of sharing information—such as printing out construction drawings and then overnighting them—couldn’t keep up with the fast track schedule that Panera Bread sought to maintain. “One day it might be ‘I didn’t get the FedEx package.’ The next day it might be ‘I’m not sure if I have the most current version of the drawings,’” remembered Grosinger. “On top of all that, the process was expensive. Our reimbursable costs from architects with respect to printing and shipping were running somewhere in the neighborhood of \$5000 per project. That’s when we started looking into a new way of doing things.”

THE SOLUTION

Accessibility and Security

Autodesk Buzzsaw was the ideal collaborative project management solution for Panera Bread. Buzzsaw provides a central repository where all project related documents, drawings, and information are always available and easily accessible. “With Buzzsaw all our prototypical documents, equipment cut sheets, and specifications are right there in one place,” said Grosinger.

Keeping this project information secure was just as important as making the information readily available—another area where Buzzsaw scored high marks with Panera Bread. “We feel very comfortable about the level of security that Buzzsaw provides,” Grosinger noted. “In addition to the password protected log in, we can review who has been on the site and what documents they’ve accessed. And if somebody no longer works for us, we can just go into our administration site and delete them as a user. Having that kind of control is important.”

Another key factor for Panera Bread was reliability. With its 99.9% guaranteed uptime, Buzzsaw ensures that crucial information is available to the company and its partners whenever they need to access it. “Dependability is crucial,” said Grosinger. “When we’re trying to keep multiple projects on time and on budget, we don’t have time for delays due to downtime. And so far, we have never not been able to access the Buzzsaw site—it’s never down.”

THE RESULTS

Increasing Efficiency on All Projects

With Buzzsaw in use by 70 people within Panera Bread and nearly 150 users outside the company, Panera Bread has been able to move full steam ahead with its expansion plans—saving time and money along the way through more effective collaborative project management.

“We’re looking at shaving a week off the time it takes us to get a café from the beginning of the design process to when it goes under construction,” said Grosinger. “That’s time saved by not having to print out documents and ship them back and forth. That saves us money, too—we’re on target to reduce our reimbursable costs by 50% per project, thanks to Buzzsaw. When you consider that we manage about 200 projects a year, that adds up to pretty significant savings.”

Grosinger concluded, “When you’re opening more than 150 new locations in a given year, you look for ways to incrementally improve upon your processes. Buzzsaw is the ‘secret ingredient’ that helps us do that.”

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