

Portal solution helps AO Foundation deliver groundbreaking knowledge to clinics without missing a beat.

Overview

■ **Challenge**

Information overload was making it increasingly difficult for surgeons to quickly identify and access relevant knowledge

■ **Why Become an On Demand Business?**

To improve member service, AO Foundation wanted to make the right information easily available to surgeons, where and when they needed it

■ **Solution**

A robust information portal that places a wealth of knowledge at the fingertips of the medical community worldwide

■ **Key Benefits**

Practical knowledge delivered directly to surgeons in their clinical settings; up-to-date information and instruction accessible by members on a global scale; increased utilization of existing AO knowledge assets



Established in 1958, Switzerland-based AO Foundation (www.aofoundation.org) is a nonprofit entity that promotes research and education in osteosynthesis, the process of treating bone fractures with engineered implants. For nearly half a century, the organization has made significant strides in improving fracture management by keeping the medical community informed about emerging osteosynthesis techniques, instruments and biomaterials. Most textbooks on the subject are either published by AO Foundation or written by one of its 250,000 certified surgeons worldwide.

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—Michael Redies, head of knowledge services, AO Foundation

On Demand Business Benefits

- Ability to distribute information that is specifically structured for easy access and usability
- A wealth of osteosynthesis information available 24x7 to surgeons around the globe
- Convenient, online knowledge repositories help members extract more value from AO's information assets
- Online medium enables AO to effectively share critical information with audiences worldwide

“We’ve made a significant step in the direction of improving medical treatment. The portal was definitely a good investment and will help us accomplish our mission more effectively.”

—Michael Redies, head of knowledge services, AO Foundation

Today osteosynthesis is used for nearly 40 percent of all fractures, and AO has its hands full keeping surgeons current with the latest procedures and equipment. To this end, AO publishes new books and journals each year, sends quarterly member mailings, sponsors conferences and offers classroom instruction.

But distributing content to the medical community and getting the knowledge into practice are two entirely different concepts. “Most of a surgeon’s day is dedicated to very practical work,” explains Michael Redies, head of knowledge services, AO Foundation. “While most doctors subscribe to medical journals, few have time to read in depth.”

Reaching an information-burdened audience

AO realized that the knowledge surgeons needed to improve patient care was often trapped in hardbound publications. According to Redies, “Just printing books and journals didn’t ensure that the information actually reached those who needed it. While our members would receive everything that we published, they simply didn’t have time to read it.”

To be more responsive to member needs, the foundation required an interactive way to reach its audience. A method that would enable surgeons to find relevant information—from archived images to step-by-step surgical procedures—in real time and from the convenience of their hospital settings.

With AO’s certification base expanding on a global scale, the organization also sought an effective method of getting new materials and training to surgeons located in remote areas. “We needed to spread our knowledge, to get information out more efficiently and in a format that our members could actually use,” recalls Redies.

Dedicated to promoting advances in medical care, the foundation was also searching for an innovative way to keep field researchers connected. “We’re in the business of improving medicine,” states Redies. “Our affiliated researchers located around the world needed an easy way to share their findings.”

Weaving medical knowledge into daily clinical practice

AO decided to develop a comprehensive Web portal that would give members easy, secured access to the organization’s breadth of knowledge. Rather than simply transfer written content verbatim to the online environment, AO revamped

the information, making it more applicable from a clinical perspective. For example, AO grouped together all of the films, lectures, studies and chapters relating to various surgical procedures into their own separate, structured repositories. “This way, we can quickly lead surgeons through the different steps of an operation rather than making them find and then make sense of disparate pieces of information,” notes Redies.

In addition to acting as an on-the-job surgical reference, the portal is also helpful for keeping global resources connected. For example, doctors must meet ongoing continuing education requirements to keep their professional certifications current. With the portal, AO instructors worldwide have access to the same syllabi, presentations and coursework to promote more consistent certifications. For the research community, the portal provides an online forum where scientists can share and collaborate on test results, regardless of their geographic location.

The portal also includes a powerful search engine so users can find the precise information they need from AO’s extensive libraries. After initial sign-on, members can conveniently browse through communal areas while built-in security measures safeguard the research forums from unauthorized access.

A robust portal infrastructure built on complementary IBM components

Working with IBM Business Partner WP Experts, AO selected IBM WebSphere® Portal software as the backbone for the environment to bring together various applications and knowledge repositories in a cohesive platform. WP Experts chose IBM Lotus® Instant Messaging and Web Conferencing (IBM Lotus Sametime®) collaboration software to enable AO member interactions at any time. To give researchers a place for online discussions and to share information among closed user groups, the team implemented IBM Lotus Team Workplace (IBM Lotus QuickPlace®) software. AO also uses IBM Lotus Notes® and IBM Lotus Domino® applications for messaging and online discussion forums.

The entire environment is framed by IBM Tivoli® Access Manager software, which gives portal users a security-rich, single sign-on experience. The team implemented IBM DB2® Universal Database™ information management software and IBM DB2 Net Search Extender software to deliver rapid search functionality. And, the team used IBM Tivoli Storage Manager software to back up AO’s information assets and to facilitate around-the-clock file access.

The On Demand Workplace Defined

A security-rich, convenient Web portal that:

- Delivers relevant articles, videos, lectures, images and instructions to surgeons at their workplaces
 - Enables researchers to collaborate with each other, regardless of location
 - Connects global staff with the latest AO-approved instruction materials to promote more standardized, controlled certification
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Key Components

Software

- IBM DB2 Universal Database
 - IBM DB2 Net Search Extender
 - IBM Lotus Domino
 - IBM Lotus Instant Messaging and Web Conferencing (IBM Lotus Sametime)
 - IBM Lotus Notes
 - IBM Lotus Team Workplace (IBM Lotus QuickPlace)
 - IBM Tivoli Access Manager
 - IBM Tivoli Storage Manager
 - IBM WebSphere Portal
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IBM Business Partner

- WP Experts
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“IBM was the only vendor that had all of the comprehensive technology we required.”

*—Oliver Trabert, portal architect,
WP Experts*

Leveraging IBM patterns for On Demand Business portal implementations, WP Experts was able to deploy the portal quickly and securely. The standards-based modularity inherent in IBM software also contributed to the rapid, four-month development cycle. According to Oliver Trabert, portal architect, WP Experts, "Out of the box, IBM software provides tremendous functionality, and the products all magically work together. IBM was the only vendor that had all of the comprehensive technology we required."

Delivering relevant information where it's needed most

The portal has dramatically improved AO's ability to serve its constituents. Rather than respond to academic needs only with printed publications, AO can now structure information in a more relevant manner and deliver content directly to the work environment—thereby aligning services to precisely what the practicing medical community needs.

The Lotus Notes and Domino platform enables AO to better leverage its existing knowledge assets by giving members Web-based access to archived information. For example, a video catalog infrequently used by members in the past has now gained greater visibility for broader use due to easy portal access.

Finally, the portal supports the organization's mission to improve medical care worldwide. The online medium enables AO to distribute critical information to surgeons located in underdeveloped nations that often cannot afford the expense of hardbound books. "The portal gives us global reach," explains Redies. "Communities in poor countries that never had access to this kind of knowledge, do now."

He adds, "We've made a significant step in the direction of improving medical treatment. The portal was definitely a good investment and will help us accomplish our mission more effectively."

For more information

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Route 100
Somers, NY 10589
U.S.A.

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