



IEA Uses Smartsheet to Automate Resource Allocation and Give Field Technicians More Time with Customers

Infrastructure and Energy Alternatives, Inc. (IEA) is a leading infrastructure construction company with specialized energy and heavy civil expertise. The company offers engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) turnkey, design-build, balance of plant (BOP), and subcontracting services.

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Chad Niemeyer, Service Director – Operations and Quality at IEA



Customer:

IEA

Industry:

Energy & Utilities

Organization Size:

Medium (50 – 999 employees)

Region:

North America

Website:

iea.net

Infrastructure and Energy Alternatives, Inc. (IEA) Infrastructure Services is a leading infrastructure support solution that provides everything from design and engineering to site development, construction, and corrective maintenance for the energy sector. The company offers engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) support to customers, managing more than 150 renewable energy servicing projects every year.

Background

To support its goal of providing consistent, high-value products and services to customers, IEA strives to equip its 200-plus employees with the best technology. *"We have over 175 technicians out in the field doing installations and repairs, and they are the people that make our business successful. We need to give them the right tools to help them track projects and do their jobs efficiently,"* says Chad Niemeyer, Service Director – Operations and Quality, IEA. *"Similarly, we need to give our managers the best tools for project management and reporting."* For the past several years, IEA has used Smartsheet to help field technicians and managers track projects and give executives deeper insights into the business. *"Smartsheet gives us an integrated set of tools to better understand how our business is operating,"* Niemeyer says.

Before adopting Smartsheet, IEA used a mix of spreadsheets, email, and conference calls to manage projects. These manual methods only worked until the company began to grow quickly. *"As we started growing past a few field crews, it became increasingly difficult for everyone to stay updated on the status of our projects,"* says Niemeyer. *"Resource management was also unmanageable. It was very difficult for us to see where technicians were assigned or which technicians were available, not to mention which projects were assigned to a specific resource. Managers would assign resources based on a gut feeling instead of actual data. We basically had no visibility into availability, which slowed down customer communications and projects overall."*

Solution

After being introduced to DDB Consultants, a consulting firm and solutions developer, IEA chose to adopt Smartsheet as its primary

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project management tool. *"We developed a true partnership with DDB,"* Niemeyer says. *"We had a shared vision internally of what we wanted to do with Smartsheet, and DDB were the experts that made that vision a reality. They had a lot of success in the renewable energy sector, and they've seen what success looks like. They really helped us see how our previous technology had been holding us back."*

DDB initially helped IEA build a resource management tool in Smartsheet that offers real-time schedule and availability data to anyone in the company. The tool relies on Smartsheet Control Center to standardize resource management by displaying all projects in one location. *"We also heavily used automated workflows in Smartsheet,"* says Gurmeet Mangat, founder, DDB Consultants. *"This notifies IEA managers when a field technician is available or unavailable and provides current and upcoming assignments at a glance."*

DDB also used Smartsheet to create a project management solution to solve IEA's visibility problem. The application gives managers real-time completion estimates, based on existing schedule data. Using this information, project managers can accurately estimate project timelines and costs internally and with customers.

IEA field technicians use the Smartsheet mobile app to quickly access Smartsheet project data wherever they're working. The technicians can also collect Smartsheet data offline, which is critical for workers at remote sites with poor internet connectivity or cell phone coverage. *"Our vision is that a project manager can run their business from a smartphone while on a fishing trip, for example,"* says Niemeyer. *"It's all about the work-life balance, which helps maximize the efficiency of our business."*

Fast access to real-time business insights

Working with DDB, IEA was able to quickly build solutions in Smartsheet and immediately get access

In a Nutshell:

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to operational insight. *“With the tools we’ve built in Smartsheet, we now have a connection between all our data, whether it’s in databases, tables, or sheets, without having to do a lot of complicated programming or a heavy development cost,”* says Niemeyer. *“For instance, we wanted to find out exactly where our cranes were being deployed at a customer site, and what time they would be there, so we could coordinate inspections. Within 90 minutes, we created a portal to enter job information and establish an inspection notification process. Overall, we can now get deeper insight into project status, and we can identify delays in work that might push back schedules. This helps us be more proactive about our work.”*

Better visibility into resource availability and allocation

Using updated project information displayed in Smartsheet dashboards, IEA project managers receive automated daily updates about project resources. *“Smartsheet gives us visibility into availability,”* says Niemeyer. *“We can see what jobs are available for technicians, and we can easily see where they’re located or what they’re doing so we can determine how to best utilize those resources. This means we can keep our technicians busy and limit their downtime, which helps drive project efficiency. We’ve been able to move past a lot of the difficult project coordination issues we had because we can clearly understand what our resource pool looks like at any given moment.”*

Better resource visibility also helps IEA communicate more effectively with customers. *“Our customers now get higher-quality project data more consistently,”* says Niemeyer. *“They can see what the status of their project is. If we have delays due to weather or equipment breakdowns, we can quickly react to those issues and let our customers know that the schedule might be altered slightly.”*



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More time for field technicians to interface with customers

Because they can easily access project data via the Smartsheet mobile app, IEA field technicians spend less time gathering data and reporting on projects. *“Smartsheet helps us support one of our main goals: timely data collection,”* says Niemeyer. *“Previously, if they didn’t have access to network resources, field technicians would wait until the end of the week and spend at least two hours updating spreadsheets. With Smartsheet, we’re saving around 50 hours every week for our technicians by automating data collection processes. Our field personnel are the cornerstone of our business, and Smartsheet greatly reduces frustration for them.”*

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IEA is now working to expand its reporting capabilities in Smartsheet by adding new features and rolling out dashboards to more people. *“We’re planning to use Smartsheet to get more insight into cycle-time analysis, so we know where we’re performing well and where we need to improve so we can take action,”* says Niemeyer. *“We are confident that Smartsheet will continue giving us faster insights into our business.”*

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