

Security tech firm ABUS uses Wrike for secure, user-friendly project management



Wrike's state-of-the-art features, including encryption and rights management, enable users to plan and execute projects securely, reliably, and intuitively.

ABUS (August Bremicker Söhne KG) was founded almost a century ago in Volmarstein, Germany, where, in 1924, August Bremicker and his sons began designing and manufacturing padlocks in the basement of the family home. Now a global enterprise with 3,500+ employees, ABUS makes a wide range of security products, including smoke detectors, alarm systems, and locks for bikes and boats. Committed to security and owner peace of mind, ABUS products and solutions have become the gold standard in property protection.

The Challenge

ABUS's project management office (PMO) is part of its Brand and Corporate Communication division. When Torsten Mühlhoff became head of Marketing Controlling & Corporate Projects in August 2017, one of his principal tasks was to create a reliable cashflow forecasting system for this division. The goal was to improve the planning and execution of marketing projects, such as ad campaigns.

At that time, each ABUS division had its own tools and methodology for developing, planning, and executing projects. While the company already had a product data management system with extensive project management features, it was far too complicated to use. Instead, staff collaborated via e-mail, Excel spreadsheets/charts, and shared document folders – leaving lots of room for improvement in transparency, accountability, and commitment.

Having also improved the organizational and procedural methods, Mühlhoff quickly realized that the best way to plan and finance projects reliably would be to use an IT-based project management solution. Searching for a solution with the optimum blend of security, functionality, and usability, Mühlhoff compared around 100 providers and had video conferences with 20 providers. When he completed his analysis, Mühlhoff presented the top two to the board – with Wrike being the recommended option.

The Solution

For ABUS, it was essential to have a cloud-based solution hosted in a European data center that complied with European data protection law. As a security tech specialist, the company was careful about transitioning to the cloud. Still Mühlhoff is convinced it was the right choice: “It’s easy to assume that an on-premise solution would be more secure than the cloud. However, our provider and its partners are much better equipped to guarantee the security we need. We’ve also reduced our admin workload and made life easier for our own IT. Of course, you have to choose the right provider in the first place and ensure you have confidence in them. Wrike is one of the most secure collaborative work management platforms out there, and we really feel we’re in the right hands.”

In autumn 2018, ABUS began a multi-week pilot with 50 Enterprise accounts in the Brand and Corporate Communication division. One of their reasons for choosing the Enterprise license was its flexible user rights concept. ABUS was particularly impressed by Wrike’s information security policy. Based on the “need-to-know” principle, it allows users and groups to access only those projects and folders relevant to them. Also, Wrike uses data encryption to add another layer of security for project data.

The solution went live in the Brand and Corporate Communication division in January 2019. By June 2019, the board had decided to roll out Wrike as the company’s new project management solution. During this period, ABUS increased their accounts to 300. There were also frequent consultations with the various divisions to learn more about their procedures and help them migrate to Wrike. This aspect of the change process – supporting both the transition and day-to-day tasks without overwhelming users – was extremely important for the project lead. “You have to understand how each division works and what their specific requirements are,” says Mühlhoff. “Introducing a new software platform and new ways of working can be a major challenge. So you have to make sure that everyone’s on board – and stays on board.”

CASE SUMMARY

Head office

Wetter (Ruhr), Germany

Industry

Security technology

Users

300

Divisions

Brand and Corporate Communication, Sales, Product Management, R&D, and more

Key features

Project templates, request forms, rights management, Gantt chart functionality, proofing, usability

Mühlhoff is particularly impressed by Wrike’s intuitive user experience, which makes it easy to set up, manage, and process new projects. “Wrike is designed to support the user, be it the project manager or a team member,” he says. “Ultimately, users only really care about one thing: Having an easy, efficient, and transparent way of working on their projects. We now have lots of people in lots of our departments who really appreciate all the different ways that Wrike can help them in their work.”

Seamless collaboration across multiple departments

In the Sales division, the use cases include fit-out projects for hardware stores, like creating retail areas to showcase ABUS products. In consultation with users, the project team analyzed the typical project steps and created a project template (blueprint) in Wrike. Next, they listed the background information required for these projects — including customer ID, customer contact details, project type (conversion or renovation) — and the project deadline. Mühlhoff explains, “To obtain these attributes, we created a request form in Wrike that allows field sales staff to enter the data when they’re with the customer, to submit the form, and to automatically create a new project in our folder structure with the relevant user rights. Wrike is extremely versatile and enables seamless collaboration across multiple departments.”

ABUS has also built product catalogs that improve coordination and feedback between the creative department and the Product Management and Sales divisions. Mühlhoff reasons, “Since the catalog creation project is implemented in Wrike, it obviously makes sense to edit the media assets there too. Users can mark up and add comments to a PDF directly in Wrike, which is easier and more efficient than having to download, edit, and re-upload a file.” Versioning ensures that everyone is working on the latest edits, and feedback can be queried directly in the file, which makes collaboration more transparent and reduces the number of revision cycles. “Wrike’s enhanced proofing features save us a lot of time and hassle on creative projects,” adds Mühlhoff.



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& Corporate Projects

The Conclusion

Thanks to the intensive support provided during rollout and beyond, Mühlhoff achieved a high level of user activity and observed that collaboration was improving with Wrike. “We now share information more quickly, we’re much more focused, and our work is more structured,” he explains. “User acceptance is extremely good in virtually every division. Our procedures, projects, and processes are now better documented and easier to follow. The ability to document verbal agreements in Wrike has improved the level of reliability and commitment in our internal collaboration. And if you can increase the level of commitment in what you think, say, and do, then not only do you have more reliable planning, more successful projects, and a more efficient organization, you also start to build a culture of trust.”

Wrike is now used to plan and execute projects throughout the company. In addition to supporting ongoing project tasks, it’s also improving day-to-day work practices for individual employees. “It’s not so much about the quantity of projects we do with Wrike, but about the quality – about how we execute those projects,” says Mühlhoff. “The better the project planning, the better we can respond to change – because we have a much better view of the relevant tasks and can see the links and dependencies more clearly. Wrike helps us keep track of everything and provides the transparency we need to respond to issues quickly.”



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