

India Forge coordinates far-flung manufacturing operations with Google Apps

INDIA FORGE

At a Glance

What they wanted to do

- Coordinate a geographically dispersed manufacturing organisation
- Deliver a consistent, useful, standard toolset
- Improve security
- Add more value to the business through IT
- Promote teamwork
- Find a cost-effective solution

What they did

- Standardised on Google Apps
- Used Google Calendar for scheduling
- Collaborated on projects using Google Docs

What they accomplished

- Provided anywhere, anytime access to communication tools
- Streamlined coordination and improved productivity
- Safeguarded intellectual property
- Enabled staff to more easily coordinate calendars
- Reduced IT overhead and focused on strategic tasks
- Cut capital expenditures

Business

Founded by the late K.C. Sood in 1960, India Forge and Drop Stampings has a long history. K.C. Sood started his career as a metallurgist in 1937, and later pioneered the forging industry in India and established the country's first commercial forging plant in Calcutta. The company he founded, India Forge, is now a Tier-I manufacturer of forgings and subassemblies for automobiles and heavy equipment. The company has 500 employees and facilities in Chennai, Faridabad, and Rudrapur. With a focus on quality, all the divisions of India Forge and Drop Stampings are compliant with ISO TS - 16949-2009 standards. Clients for the company's hubs, axle assemblies, spindles, gears, flange joints, seat rings, and other components include Maruti Suzuki, Honda, Tata, John Deere, Fiat, defence contractors, and others. A Board of Directors headed by Dipak Raj Sood now manages the company.

Challenge

With facilities located across the four corners of India, India Forge is a distributed company that must coordinate the efforts of hundreds of employees in different locations and time zones. Top priorities include upholding standardised processes to comply with ISO requirements, safeguarding clients' product designs and intellectual property, reducing costs, and spurring innovation and productivity. These goals, in turn, spur heavy reliance on IT. "Everything we do, from maximising supply chain and manufacturing efficiency to hiring employees and coordinating the efforts of our manufacturing facilities is driven by technology," says Samir Sood, Director for India Forge.

While technology systems are central to supporting the company's business processes, until recently, the infrastructure for messaging and collaboration was a hindrance to the company's productivity – and to information security. "Employees were relying on personal email accounts of many different varieties, so there was little consistency," says Samir. "Security was a big issue. We also required an IT person to manage and support messaging and resolve issues across different types of email accounts and systems."

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—Samir Sood, Director, India Forge and Drop Stampings

Samir and the IT team began evaluating options for communication and collaboration. They wanted something cost-effective and simple to maintain that would offer a high level of security. "We were looking for a single platform with integrated tools for email, calendaring, and productivity tools," says Samir. "We calculated the expense of server hardware and licenses for software for Microsoft's tools, but the cost was too high – and we absolutely did not want to purchase and maintain an in-house server infrastructure."

About Google Apps for Work

Google Apps is a cloud-based productivity suite that helps you and your team connect and get work done from anywhere on any device. Google Apps includes Gmail, Google Calendar (shared calendaring), Google Drive (online content storage and sharing), and Google Docs, Sheets & Slides (document creation and collaboration).

For more information, visit
www.google.co.in/apps

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Solution

After evaluating the leading hosted options, India Forge chose Google Apps for its uniformity, ease of use, and intuitive operation for end-users. "Many people today already have a Gmail account so it is easy for them to use the same streamlined interface at work," says Samir,

According to Samir, it was easy and fast – three months – to implement Google Apps for the company's 500 users across multiple facilities. This included migrating email to Gmail from various individual accounts across multiple providers. "Google Apps was easy to set up and it took a very limited time to get the accounts activated," he says. "It took me only 48 hours to get the first 25 people up and running and productively using Gmail. We conducted one small training seminar and a little bit of one-on-one coaching, so training expense was minimal."

Results

Today, employees all have their own corporate Gmail accounts with anytime, anywhere access to emails. "Users company-wide are excited to have their own email IDs in the organisation," he says. "And, because we have standardised corporate-wide on Gmail, our security issues were solved immediately."

Gmail promotes collaboration across the company. Samir and his team have set up email groups for quality control, HR, executives, and other groups, a huge time saver because employees no longer have to type or add individual email addresses. "Using Gmail, we can now more easily communicate to exchange ideas," he says. "This has created ownership, teamwork, and improved results on many projects. Everything is documented, so there is no more 'he said, she said.' We noticed increased productivity right away."

Users have quickly adopted the other tools in Google Apps alongside Gmail. They use Google Calendar to coordinate schedules across time zones and receive SMS meeting reminders – one of the features employees appreciate most. "Scheduling meetings and coordinating schedules is far, far easier, and that has a positive impact on our efficiency," says Samir.

Project collaborators are also more productive because they can use Google Docs to work together on documents as a team, capturing everyone's input in one place to move projects along efficiently. Samir says it is useful and easy to go back to prior saved versions and to restrict viewing rights to sensitive documents – a boon for safeguarding intellectual property. Teams are also beginning to use Google Talk to exchange short instant messages within the organisation, a capability they never had in the past that is gaining in popularity. "Integrated collaboration tools all on the same platform has greatly improved efficiency," Samir says.

The use of Google Apps has significantly reduced capital expenditures. There was no need to purchase server hardware, or to put systems in place for backup and recovery. The IT staffer that used to manage email can now focus full time on strategic IT tasks. "IT administration was greatly streamlined the second we were all on Google Apps," says Samir. "We are achieving a great return on investment from Google Apps overall."

For India Forge, perhaps the greatest benefit is the seamless connectivity among various applications in Google Apps. "Gmail was the 'killer app' that made us switch to Google Apps, but we soon discovered that Google Apps is more than the sum of its parts," says Samir. "The synergy among all the collaboration tools has greatly improved efficiency and teamwork – and opened doors for us to innovate in new ways."