



Aquire's OrgPublisher™ Enterprise Software Solution Energizes Southern Company's Organizational Charts, Fueling Efficiency and Saving Money

Overview

With 4 million customers and nearly 39,000 megawatts of generating capacity, Atlanta-based Southern Company (NYSE: SO) is the premier super-regional energy company in the Southeast and a leading U.S. producer of electricity. Southern Company owns electric utilities in four states, a growing competitive generation company, an energy services business and a competitive retail natural gas business, as well as fiber optics and wireless communications.

Challenge

Southern Company had 25,000 employees and nine operating companies, it did not have a consistent, automated means to create or distribute an accurate picture of its organization. Across the company people used a confusing and inefficient combination of presentation graphics programs and drawing and diagramming software, along with other organizational charting applications. As a result data integrity and critical HR functions were negatively affected. Inefficiency reigned.

“We have a PeopleSoft® ERP implementation and originally decided to build an interface to a manual org charting application, and it was clunky at best,” said S.G. Folsom, HRIS Manager. “When we chose to stop supporting the software, people began doing their own thing. There was just no consistency. Our company culture demands instantaneous response and accurate data and we weren't getting it.”

Solution

When a Southern Company team began researching available organizational charting tools, it found that only OrgPublisher had the flexibility and high level of performance needed.

“We needed a flexible, intuitive product and finally found it with OrgPublisher,” said Tim Moon, HR Staff Analyst. “The first day we used OrgPublisher, we had an org chart up and running. It was amazing. We were a success before we even officially rolled the product out to the company. While still in the evaluation stages, my senior vice president called from her car on the way to work requesting an org chart. I had one waiting for her as she walked in the door. Needless to say she was amazed and thoroughly sold on OrgPublisher.”

Results

The company is using OrgPublisher Enterprise for employees who want to perform “what if” scenarios to aid in career and workforce planning.

“We needed a flexible, intuitive product and finally found it with OrgPublisher. We implemented it for one purpose (an org chart) and keep finding new ideas and solutions.”

~ Tim Moon, HR Staff Analyst,
Southern Company



Aquire, Inc.
5215 N. O'Connor Blvd.
Suite 300
Irving, TX 75039 USA
Phone: 214.574.5020
Fax: 214.574.5014
Toll-free: 888.674.2427

Results (continued)

“What-if planning adds another dimension of flexibility and extends the usefulness of OrgPublisher,” said Moon. “OrgPublisher is available to all our employees and many of them are taking advantage of its capability.”

After a quick implementation of the OrgPublisher Enterprise, the team created a link on the existing HR self-service intranet portal to provide access to all employees. An introductory page explains company policies and contains links to FAQs with answers to questions such as how to search within the org chart, as well as how to install and use the product. Links to Aquire’s Web site are also included for further information and instruction.

It some very real ways, OrgPublisher is helping a big company seem friendlier.

“Our IT dept has added photos to the charts by request of the managers to help place names with faces,” said Moon. “It’s a nice touch.”

One big benefit, Moon noted, is the ability of Aquire’s solution to integrate with the company’s HRIS system. “The org chart process helps us to keep our PeopleSoft database up to date,” said Moon. “We extract position data from our PeopleSoft HR database nightly to update our chart each day. If data doesn’t look right on the chart, employees will immediately contact their local HR Rep who will correct the data in PeopleSoft. This has dramatically increased the accuracy of our position/reports-to data and has made annual processes such as our bonus distribution run much more smoothly than in the past.”

Moon is a true believer.

“I personally use OrgPublisher on a regular basis,” he said. “One of my responsibilities is to assign production work that comes through our help desk and also to create reports for the entire system. With a company our size, being able to access any organization’s structure helps me in both these tasks, whether it’s confirming the accuracy of a report or checking contacts in different companies to help a customer in areas that I might not be familiar with.”

Greg Huddleston, Director HR Business Systems, likes the improved accuracy OrgPublisher brings to the organization.

“Providing a graphic representation of employees with supplemental data has helped us improve employee data integrity,” Huddleston said. “How can you accurately evaluate raw data? You can’t. Having a graphic representation of employees helps us view reporting relationships. It’s much easier to correct bad data when you can see it clearly. We strongly encourage employees, when they find a data issue, to fix it. Data is refreshed every day using Windows Scheduler and the response time is fantastic.”

Results (continued)

Southern Company utilizes many features within OrgPublisher. Currently, the data displayed in the org chart view within OrgPublisher includes department name, job title, employee name and headcount information. Org chart boxes are represented in different colors to indicate various scenarios, such as open positions and dotted line or indirect reporting relationships. Additional information is captured and displayed from the product's Profile View. From this view, critical employee data is displayed, such as the specific company the employee works for, office location, job code, regular or temporary employee status, work address, phone, fax, and e-mail. The search feature is heavily used and is a definite time saver for employees.

The reaction from Southern Company employees has been overwhelmingly positive.

"Our end users think it's great to have the ability to access non-sensitive HR data within the Profile View," said Moon. "And of course there's career planning, organization design, workforce planning, regulatory reporting, and a variety of other administrative uses. I personally like having the ability to view head counts on different organizations without having to run another program. It's accurate every time."

"There are so many great features in OrgPublisher," added Moon. "We strongly encourage people to use the powerful Search feature. "Having a searchable org chart has pretty much replaced our phone list because people can easily access more information."

Southern Company's Transmission and Distribution Group, with about 6,000 employees, is also using OrgPublisher. The solution is particularly helpful to the Transmission group because Federal Energy Regulatory Commission guidelines require power producers to follow lines of responsibility throughout the organization. OrgPublisher is used to track workflow processes, lines of accountability or responsibility and even track emergency response teams and processes. In other words, OrgPublisher is also a compliance solution for Southern.

"We implemented OrgPublisher for one purpose and keep finding new ideas and solutions," said Moon.

Future plans for OrgPublisher include expanding self-service capabilities.

For more information about Southern Company visit www.southerncompany.com

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Aquire, Inc.
5215 N. O'Connor Blvd.
Suite 300
Irving, TX 75039 USA
Phone: 214.574.5020
Fax: 214.574.5014
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