

RoboHead® Instrumental to Monster's Creative Operations

THE ORGANIZATION

Monster is the leading global online careers network, with more than 50 million job-seeker members worldwide, a database of more than 41 million resumes, and more than 150,000 member companies. Located in Maynard, Massachusetts and founded in 1994 as The Monster Board, it is the 11th-most-visited property on the Internet.

The creative team at Monster, led by then resource manager Jacqueline Pierce, is a full-service, in-house agency that supports Monster's sales and marketing departments, as well as human resources, finance, and technology. While these departments are strongly encouraged to use the internal creative department, they can also petition to work with outside resources.

The creative team's mission is to ensure brand management by meeting their clients' creative needs and helping them achieve marketing and sales goals. Typical assignments include Web projects, print materials, trade show graphics, signage, and internal communications.

THE SITUATION

Monster's creative team is a whirl of activity, managing upwards of 100 projects a month, ranging from quick updates of existing pieces to complex, multicomponent strategic initiatives.

Divided into three separately managed units, the creative operation had no common system or process to track and manage projects. The client experience and the flow of projects, from initial intake through delivery, were different for each group.

Client Dissatisfaction

This lack of a coherent project management system was damaging the group's reputation internally, with many clients questioning whether the internal creative group could help the marketing team reach their overall goals. Specifically, clients were frustrated by the lack of transparency in the system, confused about where their projects were at any given time, and unsure whether their deadlines were going to be met. Rather than navigate the complicated internal systems, clients often sent work to more costly outside agencies.



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Employee Frustration

The creative team was also dissatisfied with the incoherent system. Team members found it difficult to track their own projects and weren't happy with their working environment. "It was painful to manage the creative team because there was no one place to go to see the status of the project," recalled Pierce. "We were using a 'catch as catch can' system, relying on e-mails and an often outdated spreadsheet for scheduling."

The lack of a single, efficient project management system also prevented Monster from analyzing project data to assess business practices, another key reason for seeking a new solution.

Determined to bring consistent practices to creative project management and bring more projects back in-house, Monster began a search for a comprehensive solution system that would

- ← Provide overall project visibility to the client
- ← Manage projects throughout their life cycles
- ← Enforce best-practice workflows and processes
- ← Communicate project status for the entire team
- ← Notify team members when their tasks are to begin or are overdue
- ← Store project materials in a single place, from creative brief through final creative files

THE EVALUATION

Pierce first consulted with internal resources to see if any available Monster technology could be applied to creative project management. After determining that none of the in-house applications were appropriate, she began investigating external options.

Typing "creative project management software" into Google, Pierce discovered several solutions designed for creative project management. Upon further review, she narrowed her choices down to RoboHead from Aquent and another software package.

Selection Criteria

To be the right fit for Monster, the solution had to meet several key requirements:

- ← Enable the management of the full spectrum of the project life cycle, from posting a creative brief to trafficking files and reviewing schedules and resources
- ← Facilitate regular communication between Creatives and clients, and among the three Creative teams
- ← Be easy to learn and to use



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The Online Advantage

RoboHead easily met all of those requirements but had the added advantage of being a Web-based, rather than purchased, solution. While Monster had not originally considered an online tool essential in its evaluation process, after reviewing RoboHead and the other system, Monster was convinced that RoboHead's model was preferable. "The other system needed to be purchased, installed, and integrated with Monster's infrastructure," said Pierce. "It was a pretty complex system with a nonintuitive user interface. Also, since Monster has offices all over the world, and our clients travel regularly, the value of an easily accessible online model like RoboHead's was really compelling," she concluded.

The Aquent Advantage

Monster also appreciated RoboHead's "creative-friendly" design. "Aquent's 20 years of experience in the creative field clearly made its way into RoboHead," said Pierce. "Aquent really understands the inner workings of a creative operation, and RoboHead was designed to meet those unique needs." Monster also viewed Aquent's size, reputation, and longevity as benefits. "Like Monster, Aquent is a global firm with a strong track record," said Pierce. "They're not just a software company...they're a marketing and communications partner."

RoboHead was found to be the right choice for a single, coherent project management solution. After a review by an internal business systems analyst confirmed RoboHead's compatibility with its infrastructure, Monster moved forward with implementation.

THE SOLUTION

While Pierce knew that RoboHead was the right solution for the organization, she wanted to gain buy-in from colleagues. Aquent worked closely with Monster to understand the group's needs and tailor an implementation plan that worked best for them. Aquent recommended a phased rollout that would gradually bring a large number of staff on board with minimal disruption.

Phase 1: The Pilot

RoboHead was first piloted with a small team of four creatives and one client. By design, the pilot was a particularly complex project—a direct mail campaign with 67 unique e-mail messages designed to attract new customers. For one month, the pilot team put RoboHead to the test, "pushing it to see how it worked," as Pierce described it. RoboHead exceeded the success criteria, convincing the five-person team that the solution was right for Monster. The pilot also helped the team identify and implement specific business practices for using RoboHead, such as how to use e-mail notification and collaboration areas.



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Phase 2: The Rollout

Next, RoboHead was put through its paces by a larger review audience of 35, opening it up to the entire creative staff and a broader range of project types, work styles, and personalities.

Aquent came on-site to Monster for training, running separate sessions for project managers, creatives, and clients. Each group was instructed on how to use RoboHead's integrated Web-based tools and given time to "play" with the system in order to develop a comfort level with its scheduling, workflow, and collaboration capabilities.

Even though every user learns at his or her own pace, Pierce said that RoboHead's intuitive interface and easy-to-learn functionality were a hit. "Clients were particularly thrilled with RoboHead," said Pierce. They were excited to have a tool they could use at their desks, at home, or when traveling."

After a two-month Phase 2 rollout, RoboHead was introduced to all potential users, both clients and creatives—a total user base of 125.

THE RESULTS

The first RoboHead pilot began in January 2005. Today, everyone who works in or with the creative team must use RoboHead to manage a project, making the system an integral part of the creative organization. RoboHead is an "everyday tool" for project managers and the traffic manager, who rely on it to manage the flow of work and check for potential obstacles in meeting client needs. Creatives and clients log on to RoboHead when they have projects in process.

Discovering Additional Benefits

In addition to the project management features she knew would be beneficial, Pierce has discovered the advantages of RoboHead's time sheet feature, which tracks resource use for each project. "At Monster, we have a strong focus on ROI. We've found that RoboHead's time-tracking feature is the best way to measure ROI on creative projects; it's now mandatory for our creatives to use," said Pierce.

Monster is also tracking the number of jobs that come in to the creative operation (now united under a single management team). With clients embracing RoboHead, Pierce expects less use of outside agencies. "We now have a single, coherent system for managing creative projects; we've eliminated the source of client confusion," said Pierce. "I fully expect to see a decrease in the use of outside resources, which is a financial benefit to Monster."



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How RoboHead Works for Monster

In all, RoboHead is handling each of the 100 or so projects the Monster creative team handles each month. Pierce has identified several key benefits of the system:

- ← RoboHead allows everyone involved with a creative project to see exactly what they need to see—and only what they need to see
- ← Clients have “transparency” with projects; they know exactly where their projects are at any given time and can stay informed of schedule and budget
- ← Project managers can track and measure projects, including staff availability, resource allocation, and estimated versus actual time spent on a task

Aquent remains involved with Monster, ensuring that RoboHead continues to meet the organization's needs as it adds users and functionality. Said Pierce, “The RoboHead staff at Aquent are dedicated, completely available, flexible, and enthusiastic. They've simplified what we anticipated would be a complex implementation.”

