

Sensei



Microsoft
Preferred Solution



The verdict is in: Thompson Coburn achieves a single pane of glass for all of their project needs with Sensei IQ.

Thompson Coburn is a law firm with over 400 attorneys. They have experience in more than 50 areas of the law. Supported by their firm's state-of-the-art technology, lawyers in their Chicago, Dallas, New York, Los Angeles, Southern Illinois, St. Louis and Washington, D.C. offices enjoy a nationwide practice.

Their IS department created a Project Management Office (PMO) to deal with the myriad projects in their purview. After starting with a basic work management platform, they recognized they needed a true Project and Portfolio Management solution to provide resource management and a single pane of glass view across the portfolio.

Sensei IQ with Project for the web and Planner has provided a holistic view that enables them to make data-driven decisions. They have a clear understanding of what resources are working on which projects. And they have robust automated reporting so that leadership receives the regular detailed updates that they were missing.



AT A GLANCE

CLIENT NAME
Thompson Coburn

LOCATION
United States

SIZE
500+

INDUSTRY
Legal

TECHNOLOGIES





Client Challenges

It's easy to forget that law firms are also actual businesses, and that large law firms experience all the needs and challenges that are part of any large business. At Thompson Coburn, they have a large IS department that needs to manage significant projects, from software, to hardware, office moves, expansions, and more. They're running a business.

Recognizing that they needed more structured project management, they created a PMO. As with all new PMO's, they spent the first couple of years building the team and designing processes. They understood the need for the proper tools to fully succeed and started using a basic cloud-based work management platform in the marketplace. The tool worked fine for task management, but it fell short of meeting their full project and portfolio management needs.

"It only took us a few moderate to large projects to understand that the task management platform would not be viable for the long term," says Dawn Sheridan, Manager of Business Analysis & Projects at Thompson Coburn. One missing item was Resource Management. Sheridan says, "One glaring gap was understanding capacity planning. When asked about what resources were on multiple projects or who was available for a project, we didn't have a clear answer without a lot of manual intervention."

They also realized they were missing a "big-picture view" of what they were doing. "When my CIO asked me," Sheridan related, "what resources are working on what projects and how many hours they were spending on projects, I didn't know, I can't find that out. I couldn't gather the big picture together easily." Things weren't integrated in their existing tool: "Because there are different sheets for different things, we didn't have a holistic view," Sheridan says. "The bottom line," she adds, "is that we needed something beyond a task management tool. We needed a full project and portfolio management solution that could mature with us as our needs changed."

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Solution



So they began the effort to find the best solution. They looked at use cases and their requirements, particularly the need for a tool that moved beyond task management into resource management and full PPM. They did due diligence and vetted multiple tools. After thorough investigation, they selected Sensei IQ with Project for the web and Planner.

Sensei IQ is an adaptive project and strategic portfolio management solution that aligns, optimizes, and tracks work in an organization. Deployed securely in the client's Microsoft 365 tenant, Sensei IQ utilizes Microsoft Power Apps, Power Automate, and Power BI to give teams meaningful insights into projects, programs, and resources across portfolios.

Thompson Coburn was pleased to find a solution in Sensei IQ that integrated so well with Microsoft. "We are a Microsoft shop," says Sheridan, "and we knew that we needed a tool that would integrate easily with our software base and infrastructure."

In addition, the firm was already going in the direction of expanding its use of Microsoft's Power Platform. "We wanted to future proof our solution and liked that Sensei IQ utilized the Power Platform" says Sheridan. "We recognized that Sensei IQ provided a path that as we grew, it could grow with us."

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Thompson Coburn found that not only has Sensei IQ grown with them, but indeed adding the tool and the Sensei team's expertise has helped them to improve. "When we started with Sensei," says Sheridan, "we were a very young PMO. We were trying to build a team and understand what we needed, trying to define basic processes." For example, they had a process flow, but it wasn't documented. After they were able to come to a better understanding of their current processes, they worked with their Sensei Engagement Lead to document it and design the configuration of Sensei IQ to fully implement it. They worked with department leadership and got broad input to make it successful for all stakeholders."

Sheridan makes the point that implementing a PPM solution is a significant undertaking: "It took some time for us to get our bearings. Sensei IQ with Project for the web and Planner is a robust platform, and we did not have mature processes when we onboarded." They especially benefited from the on-demand e-learning, which helped them not only to understand the tool, but also helped them to define their processes.

Sheridan has a simple piece of advice for organizations deploying Sensei IQ: "Be patient, because once it comes together, it's so exciting."

Client Benefits

Sheridan says that she has many things to be excited about with their deployment of Sensei IQ. It provides a holistic view of their portfolio and allows them to make data-driven decisions. Being able to engage their CIO in the process so that he can provide approvals via the platform for both moving projects forward and for change requests is “another win”.

Additionally, they have been able to incorporate their existing processes into Sensei IQ functionality. “We have incorporated our charter into the Sensei Business Case business process flow instead of having a stand-alone Word document,” says Sheridan. “Business cases scoring helps set priority on scheduling projects. Our milestones are entered as Key Dates and Risks directly into the RAID log. It reduces duplicated effort and eliminates the need for an external document. When there are questions about the charter, the sponsor or team member can view it in Sensei IQ without looking through another repository.”

The reporting is also a huge benefit that they are already experiencing with Sensei IQ. They have progressed from feeling like they couldn’t even provide a good status report to having robust reporting at the click of a button. “Sensei IQ brings everything together in one place,” says Sheridan. “I can go to one place and see my RAID, my projects, my resources, everything all at once. In the previous tool we used, everything was separate. With Sensei IQ I have pre-configured reports in Power BI rather than having to create my own reports. I have a picture which has the KPI’s, the status, the number of resources. The automated Project Summary Report in particular has cut down a lot of time for me when I provide a weekly status update to the CIO. I also have great reporting for my monthly reports to the COO.”



Beyond just the excellent tool, Sheridan has also liked working with the Sensei Team: “Our experience working with Sensei has been very positive. Our Client Success Manager has been very helpful and addressed any concerns we’ve had. Our Engagement Lead has helped us with our customizations, and he is a very good resource to bounce things off to improve our processes. Everyone we’ve engaged with on the Sensei Team brings a great amount of industry knowledge and how other clients do things. From significant configurations to simple tweaks, Sensei has implemented things that fit our processes and streamline our efforts.”

Asked to summarize what it’s been like partnering with Sensei and using Sensei IQ, Sheridan says, “It has given us the tools that we need to be successful. We’d be lost without it. It has become the basis and core of everything we do that’s project related.”

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