



## AS INNOVATIVE AS YOU ARE

### Case Study: The Innovation Synergy Centre in Markham

The Innovation Synergy Centre in Markham (ISCM) is a not-for-profit business advisory hub that is dedicated to helping businesses with issues of growth and development. ISCM was founded by Bob Glandfield, P.Eng., with the support of the Town of Markham, The National Resource Council, and the Ontario Ministry of Innovation. In the beginning, ISCM was a small organization that provided assistance to a selection of small-to-mid-sized technology companies, but the organization has since seen a tremendous amount of growth and has expanded its service. ISCM provides its clients free access to a variety of services, including workshops, management advice, business mentoring, training courses, referrals to government programs, and linkages to Universities and colleges for collaborative purposes.

As a small, young organization, ISCM realized a need to track and manage each of its client cases. In evaluating various management options, ISCM found many existing project management solutions to be too complicated for its small user base. What ISCM was looking for was a simple Case Management System that was easy to use and access from beyond the office walls, as many of its mentors are actually contractors who work from different locations. Of course, as a not-for-profit organization, ISCM was also concerned with finding a viable solution that was reasonably priced.

To help build its Case Management System, ISCM's President and CEO Bob Glandfield chose SmartSimple "for its simplicity and adaptability." Janet Gosling, Business Analyst at ISCM, recommended SmartSimple to Glandfield because it was an affordable solution that was easy to shape around the organization's unique needs. "There's so much you can do. You create the system from the beginning," says Gosling.

Because it is so easy to modify as business needs change, the SmartSimple solution has been expanded as ISCM has grown, with additional options like Universal Tracking, Event Management and Support Management. A major factor in ISCM's selection of SmartSimple over other available options was that, according to Gosling, "[SmartSimple] was able to work around our process, instead of the other way around."

SmartSimple led the initial implementation of ISCM's Case Management System, but Gosling and her team have since taken over administrative control of the system and facilitated the addition of new applications. Gosling's technical expertise has enabled her to come up with ideas for delivering more functionality to ISCM's user base with the SmartSimple solution, and she has found SmartSimple to be very receptive to her suggestions. Of her work with SmartSimple, Janet says, "There's real collaboration between them and us. We will come up with an idea and they will incorporate it."

Although Gosling has found her technical background to be valuable when developing new ideas with SmartSimple, she says of her daily use of ISCM's system, "I've never seen anything so simple." SmartSimple features icons that direct users to the information and actions that they require from a web-based interface, and offers access to live data, so that users are always dealing with up-to-date information. In addition to being easy to use in practice, the system is also simple to set up in training environments. During training, Gosling can manage the data that users can access and minimize their view until they become accustomed to navigating the applications.

Gosling and her team have been instrumental in introducing Regional Innovation Networks (RINs), as well as other organizations like the Ontario Centres of Excellence (OCE) and the Toronto Region Research Alliance (TRRA), to the SmartSimple methodology. Having seen the success of ISCM's solution, the RINs were looking to develop their own solutions to help facilitate collaboration between organizations. With Ontario's commercialization efforts, it is important for these RINs to be able to easily connect businesses, institutions and local government. To facilitate better connections, a group at the Ministry of Research and Innovation is working to gather data, and the SmartSimple system will help to ensure that all data is entered in a consistent format.

ISCM's set of SmartSimple applications is constantly evolving. It now includes an Applicant Tracking application that links to a Ministry site providing access to ISCM's mentors. As ISCM's network of affiliated organizations expands, the agency continues to use SmartSimple to better connect people and consistently manage data within collaborative activities and environments. From its beginnings as a Case Management System, ISCM's SmartSimple solution has grown to better facilitate collaboration, track activities, and manage events.