

Company | James Avery

James Avery is a truly vertically integrated company that takes raw gold and silver, manufactures its own uniquely designed jewelry, and distributes it for sale both online and in its own chain of 42 retail stores. Mr. Avery is still actively designing jewelry for the company.

Foresight | Why We chose @task

As the IT Project Coordinator, I report directly to the CIO. When I arrived, he had already made the determination that we needed a more sophisticated approach than we were using. The need was pretty apparent. It's really an exciting time for us; we're taking advantage of the sophisticated tools out there and expanding our business. As the volume of management discussions grow, there is just way too much to manage or remember in your head.

As we were looking for a solution, I sent a survey to our managers and department heads that asked, "What are you using now?" Quite a few were using Excel or a combination of Excel and sticky notes. We started with MS Project, and I knew that we didn't want to go further down that road. It was just too cumbersome. I thoroughly researched the options. My short list came down to @task, Vertabase, Project Insight, and PPM6 from eProject.

When I went out to research the options, I built a list of features being offered in the space. Then I sent that list through the company asking which features from the list were important to each group. That process gave me about 10 critical features, which I then sent to each potential vendor on my list. The vendor responses boiled the field down to two: @task and Vertabase.

I then scheduled back-to-back demos. When we were finished, I asked for a vote on the look of the software. All but two chose @task. They asked me which I would choose, and I said @task.

Hindsight | Why @task was the Right Choice

It really came down to what is easier to use. I have users who are very sophisticated and some with very limited computer experience—they may not even know how to access the Internet. Our project management solution couldn't be intimidating for the less-savvy users. If the solution I brought in wasn't easy to use, they would just go back to Excel and sticky notes. Since implementation, we have not had ANY problems. We've already left our legacy system behind.

The more we use @task, the more we come to depend on it. One of the most important features of @task is visibility. Our CIO needs to know from me exactly what we're doing. Now, I don't actually give him anything—he just logs on to @task. Our conversations are much more productive because he knows what to ask after taking five minutes in @task to get the status. He also gets his information unfiltered, so if someone above him is busting his chops over some issue, he's fully versed in minutes and knows how to respond.

We hold a weekly project meeting where we discuss the impact of our projects on other departments—something we just couldn't do before. I have to tell you, the e-support has been great. They told me that turnaround on the forums was usually about an hour, but I've done my share of postings on the user forums, and it's always less than an hour before someone submits a clear response. I've been to boot camp and taken advantage of your rollout coaching package.