

Case Study

GroupSystems Success Story: NASA

Columbia Accident Investigation Board Uses GroupSystems in its Attempts to Identify the Root Cause of the Accident

On February 1st, 2003, the Space Shuttle Columbia, STS-107, broke apart upon its descent back to Earth above the state of Texas, resulting in the death of all seven crew members aboard the shuttle. Tragedies like this greatly affect NASA as an organization, but most importantly affect the families and friends of those who lost their lives.

Fortunately these instances happen very infrequently. As a result of the Space Shuttle Challenger, January 28, 1986, NASA has instituted independent investigation boards to analyze and report on important cases significant to the program.

NASA quickly authorized an independent investigative board, The Columbia Accident Investigation Board (CAIB), to undertake this comprehensive study concerning the reentry of Space Shuttle Columbia. The CAIB established three working groups, each dedicated to investigating a specific subject area concerned with the accident.

GroupSystems in Action

The Columbia Accident Investigation Board implemented the GroupSystems platform for a multitude of information gathering sessions. The system was used to develop ideas, quickly and simultaneously identify questions that needed answers. The Systems helped look at possible fact patterns and outline all possible scenarios related to the accident.

Participants brainstormed on common questions and issues pertaining to the physical crash as well as organizational issues that may have led to the unfortunate scenario. While brainstorming they saw not only their own responses, but also the responses of everyone logged on to the system.

Themes were developed, prioritized and then represented in detail to help expedite as well as strengthen the accident report process. As a result of the CAIB's work and analysis, 29 specific recommendations were made to help NASA better its organization.

"We knew that GroupSystems could serve an important role for the Board"

Douglas Griffen, Director of Strategy and Facilitation
– Advanced Strategy Center

Customer
NASA

Business Benefits of GroupSystems

- Increase the level of focus and dialogue on critical issues.
- Allowed members to comment on specific recommendations and ensure that they are consistent with the overall recommendations and findings of the Board