



Microsoft Business Solutions Customer Solution Case Study



Overview

Country: United States

Industry: Government

Customer Profile

The Marquette County Road Commission maintains state, county, and local roads in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The Road Commission must ensure reporting and funds are accurate to fulfill its charter.

Business Situation

State and federal government funding requires that the Road Commission report its financial activity annually, and it wanted to streamline processes and strengthen fiscal accountability.

Solution

The Road Commission implemented Microsoft® Business Solutions–Great Plains®, now a part of Microsoft Dynamics™, and deployed WennSoft Job Cost and Time Track to integrate and improve data gathering and reporting.

Benefits

- Improved process efficiencies and higher value of assets
- Better access to timely, useful information
- More effective use of resources
- Better reporting and strengthened fiscal accountability



Road Commission Increases Efficiencies and Fiscal Accountability, Saves Resources

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Mary Herman, Associate Accountant, Marquette County Road Commission

Larger than the state of Rhode Island, Marquette County is Michigan's largest county, with a population of approximately 64,000 within its 1,873 square miles. The Marquette County Road Commission serves and maintains approximately 1,482 miles of state, county, and local roads. Annually, the Road Commission's financial managers report financial activity to residents, township officials, county board members, and state of Michigan departments of treasury and transportation. To make this reporting easier and more cost-effective, the Road Commission partnered with Anderson, Tackman and Company (ATCO) and WennSoft—both Microsoft® Gold Certified Partners—to implement Microsoft Business Solutions–Great Plains®, now a part of Microsoft Dynamics™, along with WennSoft Job Cost and Time Track. Since that deployment, the Road Commission has been able to access valuable information more easily and quickly, improve process efficiencies to save time and cut costs, and integrate operations to achieve a greater level of financial accountability.



Situation

The Marquette County Road Commission in Michigan comprises approximately 75 employees, including administration and engineering staff, drivers, equipment operators, and mechanics. Winter maintenance (plowing, sanding, and salting) in addition to road construction, street paving, controlling vegetation, and roadside ditch maintenance are the responsibility of the commission. The Road Commission must maintain a fleet of tri-axle specialty trucks and heavy equipment, paving tools, tractors, snowplows, and street sweepers. Because the Marquette County Road Commission receives the majority of its funding from state and federal road funds, it must file financial reports annually. Reporting requirements include the cost of jobs, types of jobs, cost by activity, time tracking, purchasing, sales, payroll, inventory, and assets.

Until 1999, the Road Commission used DOS-based software for its accounting. Reports were limited to those preprogrammed in the application, and much information was referenced by looking for the previously printed monthly reports. The Road Commission's general ledger functioned as its job-costing system and their fixed asset records were maintained as part of their accounting software.

"With the old system, the Marquette County Road Commission employees were very limited in what information they could get out of it," says Lee Larsen, Senior Consultant for Anderson, Tackman and Company (ATCO). "Many times, employees would print out reports and then manually take the data and enter it in spreadsheets to get the exact information they needed."

ATCO is a Certified Public Accounting firm with a focus on financial management software consulting for businesses using

Microsoft® Business Solutions–Great Plains® software.

To develop and deploy a solution, the Road Commission chose to collaborate with two partners: WennSoft and ATCO. WennSoft develops and supports service management, job cost, and equipment management solutions that improve efficiency, expedite reporting, and create cost saving opportunities for customers.

Solution

The Marquette County Road Commission implemented Microsoft Great Plains software, now a part of Microsoft Dynamics™, and the WennSoft products as their new integrated solution. With the WennSoft Job Cost and Time Track modules extending the fixed asset and payroll modules of Microsoft Great Plains, the Road Commission was able to gain a flexible solution for their job costing, time tracking, fixed asset management, general ledger, purchasing, payroll, human resources, inventory, and bank reconciliation. The decision to purchase this solution was based on two factors: Components of the software would allow the Road Commission to set benchmarks for jobs, and its employees were familiar with the Microsoft environment, which would allow ease of use and minimal training time. ATCO helped the Road Commission implement the Microsoft Great Plains and WennSoft solution.

Tracking Projects and Assets

The new solution allowed state, county, and township roads, construction projects, and pieces of equipment to be set up as individual jobs. The full integration between Microsoft Great Plains and the WennSoft modules helped enable employees to access information easily, use tools they're already familiar with, and choose from multiple analysis and reporting options. The integrated Microsoft Great Plains solution runs on Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003 operating

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Marquette County Road Commission

system, with the Microsoft Office System, including Microsoft Excel® 2002 spreadsheet software.

The Road Commission uses Crystal Reports reporting technology and Microsoft Business Solutions for Analytics–FRx®. Employees can extract data from one integrated database and then use Crystal Reports and Microsoft FRx to report to the Road Commission board.

Delivering Meaningful, Insightful Information

Employees also use Microsoft FRx software for the Road Commission monthly financial statements for use by the road commissioners. Microsoft FRx software pulls information from the general ledger so employees can create a single, comprehensive financial report book. Now, Road Commission employees can organize financial reports, charts, and even nonfinancial documents in a logical, sequential order. Previously, Road Commission employees were limited to reporting only what was preprogrammed in the DOS-application or manually generated reports.

Building an Integrated, Comprehensive Solution

Employees use the WennSoft Job Cost and Time Track modules to track labor costs, equipment usage, inventory, and purchases. WennSoft also was able to provide the technical software that ensures the Road Commission can report sufficiently on the different construction and maintenance jobs, as well as equipment profitability.

The Job Cost and Time Track modules from WennSoft seamlessly integrate with Microsoft Great Plains. The software environment in Wennsoft is straightforward for someone who is familiar with Microsoft, because both of the WennSoft modules use the same

programming language as Microsoft Great Plains.

“In working with the road commission, it is easy to see how the integration between the Time Track module, fixed assets, and job costing make the lives of the data entry people much easier,” says Mike Meyer, Solutions Consultant for WennSoft. “The integrated solution provides one point of entry for all information relating to employees and equipment.”

With the WennSoft Time Track module, Road Commission employees can perform their Job Cost payroll data entry in one place. Also using Time Track, the Road Commission employees can record the hours that each piece of equipment has been used on individual jobs. This information can then be filtered down to payroll and reported on through Job Cost. This data is important because reporting the labor and equipment hours is a requirement of the state of Michigan, and is calculated as part of the cost of each job. Additionally, the WennSoft modules have capabilities that facilitate tracking the equipment at an even more detailed level. The Road Commission has millions of dollars in equipment, or assets, so it needs to be able—reliably and accurately—to track equipment on the job, and to track equipment usage.

“It’s a comprehensive solution,” adds Mary Herman, Associate Accountant for the Marquette County Road Commission. “Not only are all of the road jobs set up, but we have set up vacation and training time, as well, so everything is in one place.”

Benefits

The availability of useful information in a timely manner is a key benefit. Employees can streamline their processes and, ultimately, save time. Extracting data has become easier, and tracking and reporting

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equipment and jobs is more efficient. Now the Road Commission can demonstrate stronger fiscal responsibility and accountability.

“We use Microsoft Great Plains and WennSoft every day—from our inventory module to payroll, labor, and equipment. The best part is how easy it is to find the data we need in such a familiar Microsoft environment,” says Herman.

Improved Process Efficiencies and Higher Value of Assets

Rather than focusing on the systems that run its organization, the Marquette County Road Commission can now focus on making the most of its resources. “With Microsoft Great Plains, WennSoft, Crystal Reports and Microsoft FRx, we’ve been able to streamline our processes,” says Herman.

Process efficiencies have helped enable the Road Commission to better track equipment, equipment usage, and job estimates to actuals at a very detailed level. The employees can properly allocate all labor and equipment time to the correct segment of each job.

Better Access to Timely, Useful Information

Meeting the Road Commission’s highly customized business-specific needs has never been easier—all details of the hundreds of jobs are now easily accessible in the WennSoft Job Cost module. The general ledger in Microsoft Great Plains has now been pared to only a few hundred accounts, most of which are posted in summary only.

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More Effective Use of Resources

The Road Commission does its own payroll, and the state requires that it do extensive data entry and recording; therefore, saving time is extremely important. The WennSoft Time Track module has added a single point of entry for the Road Commission’s payroll where the application pulls from all of the jobs. Employees no longer need to re-key data. Eliminating this step saves an enormous amount of time when working with thousands of transactions a week as the Road Commission employees do.

“Once we became proficient with our integrated solution and could eliminate much of the re-keying of data, the Road Commission was able to allow one employee to go part-time,” adds Herman.

Better Reporting and Strengthened Fiscal Accountability

Complementing both Microsoft Great Plains and WennSoft, employees use Crystal Reports and Microsoft FRx to modify and create their own reports, thus helping to ensure they are providing the appropriate information in the most practical format. Additionally, compared with the previous system, Crystal Reports and FRx allow employees of the Road Commission to deliver more information quickly. The Road Commission can provide these accounting reports to the township and state government, as well as the public, not only in less time than before, but also with higher accuracy.

Since the Road Commission has been using the new solution, auditors have been impressed with the new reporting results, especially the drill-down capabilities in the WennSoft Job Cost module. Herman adds, “Auditors can look for a specific transaction and tie it to the general ledger.”

For More Information

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For more information about WennSoft products and services, call (262) 317-3715 or visit the Web site at: www.wennsoft.com

For more information about Anderson, Tackman and Company products and services, call (920) 432-6661 or visit the Web site at: www.atcogb.com

For more information about Marquette County Road Commission products and services, call (906) 486-4491.

“Whether it’s job information for the foreman or financial comparisons for the Road Commission management and board, the data has been extracted into a useable format—and most importantly, the auditors are pleased,” says Larsen.

Microsoft Business Solutions

Microsoft Business Solutions offer integrated business applications and services that allow small and midsize organizations and divisions of large enterprises to connect employees, customers, and suppliers for improved efficiency. The financial management, customer relationship management, supply chain management, and analytics applications work with other Microsoft software, including the Microsoft Office System and the Windows operating system, to streamline processes across an entire organization. This gives businesses insight to respond rapidly, plan strategically, and execute quickly. Microsoft Business Solutions are delivered through a worldwide network of channel partners that provide specialized services and local support tailored to a company’s needs.

For more information about Microsoft Business Solutions, go to: www.microsoft.com/businesssolutions

Software and Services

- Microsoft Dynamics
 - Microsoft Business Solutions for Analytics–FRx
 - Microsoft Business Solutions–Great Plains 7.5
- Microsoft Office System
 - Microsoft Excel 2002
 - Microsoft Word 2002
- Microsoft Windows Server System™
 - Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Solutions
 - WennSoft Job Cost and Time Track 7.5 Technologies
 - Crystal Reports

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