Integrated Project Accounting System: Creative Solution for CMD

Why search for separate advertising, public relations, print design, video, and Web-site vendors when you can get them all under one roof?

CMD provides marketing communication services like these with integrated management for clear, consistent marketing messages across multiple disciplines. Founded in 1978 as Creative Media Development, today CMD is a subsidiary of JELD-WEN, Inc., the largest privately held company in Oregon. CMD's clients include Hewlett Packard, Cisco Systems, Dr. Martens, Novell, BridgePort Brewing, and Applied Materials.

One of CMD's biggest challenges is allocating employees' time to appropriate projects. "We're just like a law or accounting firm, selling our employees' time," explains Dave Eakin, CFO for CMD. "Entering timecard data was a full-time job, and a major headache."

Another issue was tracking the progress of individual projects and managing performance to bid, so project managers could know the precise status of a job and have a chance to improve profitability. CMD also needed to synch its chart of accounts with its parent company. CMD had been happy with Sage MAS 90 as its accounting system for more than 10 years, but found they needed a more comprehensive solution for their growing consulting force, including special-feature modules and the sophistication of SQL architecture. So CMD upgraded to Sage MAS 500 ERP with Project Accounting and eTimesheets modules.

Tallying Up Timecard Information

Sage MAS 500's eTimesheets module is a browser-based time and expense application for dispersed or diverse workgroups. "eTimesheets allows staff members to enter time spent on projects from their desktop, for accurate and speedy tracking," says Eakin. "We've been able to eliminate our data entry position and reassign that person to more productive tasks. This was a significant portion of our justification for migrating to Sage MAS 500."

Additional savings have come from avoiding duplicate entries, cutting keystrokes, and deferred hiring of support people.

Customer:

CMD

Industry:

Integrated marketing communications

Location:

Portland, Oregon

Number of Locations

One

Number of Employees

103

System:

Sage MAS 500

- Accounts Payable
- Accounts Receivable
- Customizer
- DataPorter
- eTimesheets
- General Ledger
- Project Accounting
- Purchase Order

CHALLENGE

Eliminate errors and inefficiencies of centralized timecard data entry procedures, and find a way to maximize employee hours allocated to billable projects.

SOLUTION

Sage MAS 500 with eTimesheets and Project Accounting modules.

RESULTS

Freed up full-time data entry position for more productive work; Created better margins due to improved efficiency and accuracy in forecasting.

Bird's Eye View with Project Accounting

The eTimesheets module is part of Sage MAS 500 Project Accounting, which tracks actual versus estimated costs for each job. "With Project Accounting, project managers can see precisely how much has been charged against a job," says Eakin. "With up-to-the-minute information, we have greatly reduced cost overruns because we can nip problems in the bud. If one part of a video campaign is taking longer than anticipated, for example, we can make changes quickly. This is essential because most of our projects are fixed fee, and overruns take a big bite out of profitability. It also helps with forecasting, because we recognize revenue by percentage of completion rather than invoice amount."

Eakin likes the control provided by Project Accounting. "The module's gatekeeping functions let us restrict the number of people who can charge to a project," he notes. "We create team rosters for each project. If you're not on the roster, you can't post time to the job. This has minimized mistakes." Managers can also monitor individual performance to ensure high billable hours and utilization.

With the versatility built in to the Sage MAS 500 General Ledger system and its expansive chart of accounts, CMD is now able to share data seamlessly with its parent company. Eakin says he appreciates how simple it is to extract data from the system, making it easy to respond to the parent's requests.

"A thoroughly integrated system like Sage MAS 500 mirrors our corporate strategy, which is all about integrated marketing services," Eakin says. "When information flows smoothly across disciplines, the whole company works more efficiently. We benefit with higher profitability, and our clients benefit with more comprehensive services."

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