

Garver Engineers

GARVER ENGINEERS

Engineering Firm Improves Accounting and HR Processes after switching from Sema4 to Deltek Vision®

“Now, with Deltek Vision ... project managers can see why accounting and marketing request the information that they do and what that information is used for. It has really opened up the lines of communication in our firm.”

Brenda Berry, Accounting Supervisor for Garver Engineers

THE CHALLENGE

Garver Engineers, a 175-employee engineering firm based in Little Rock, Arkansas, was a satisfied customer of accounting system SEMA4 for more than 10 years. The firm, which provides consulting, engineering and design services to approximately 1200 domestic clients, used SEMA4 to handle financial and project accounting for various high-profile projects.

In 2000, however, Deltek acquired SEMA4. With the acquisition came a transition to Deltek Vision, Deltek's web-based ERP system for professional services firms. The acquisition launched Garver into what was then largely uncharted territory—as the first and largest Deltek client to switch from SEMA4 to Deltek Vision to date.

THE SOLUTION

Although pleased with SEMA4's flexibility and reporting functionality, Garver was looking forward to adopting a fully web-based accounting system. The next version of SEMA4 was slated to have these capabilities. As Brenda Berry, Accounting Supervisor for Garver recalled, the company was eagerly anticipating the newest SEMA4 version when it learned the news of the company's acquisition at a user conference back in 2000.

“We were caught off guard and even a little reluctant because we were so pleased with the SEMA4 system,” Berry admitted. “Then we learned about Deltek. We saw the Deltek Vision demo and were floored by the system's robust capabilities. Our previous fears about losing functionality and taking a step backward were quickly diminished.”

In particular, Deltek Vision's web-based functionality was a key element for the engineering firm. With eight regional offices operating in different areas of the country, accessibility to financial and project data from anywhere in the world was not only a key component in staying up-to-date, it was a timesaving measure. At the time, Garver had to make database copies of all financial and project information and push them out to each regional server every night. To ensure each regional office had access to current information, Berry and her team routinely executed this laborious seven-hour process. The firm was also impressed by Deltek Vision's dashboard and drill-down functionality, as it allowed for both high-level decision-making and

Stats at a glance

Company Name

Garver Engineers

Headquarters

Fayetteville, AR

Primary Business

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URL

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detailed analysis into virtually every aspect of a project-based business, from financial figures to project budgets to marketing opportunities.

According to Marketing Manager Diane Barton, Deltek Vision was eagerly awaited by the marketing department because of its integration with accounting.

"Prior to Vision, there was just no test for marketing to tell whether a project was a sure thing or not," she said. "But we immediately saw that Vision would closely tie accounting with marketing, and help align our sales goals with our opportunities and marketing campaigns."

THE BENEFITS

According to Berry, the implementation period in late 2002 and early 2003 exposed some differences in the accounting philosophies of SEMA4 and Deltek Vision. These differences ushered in a new era of change at Garver, as the employees had to quickly learn to adapt to the new system. Adding to the confusion, Garver was changing from an incorporated firm to a limited liability company, running two separate sets of books while transitioning to the new system. Conversely, the marketing department's transition from legacy system AE Award to Deltek Vision took just under three months and went more smoothly.

"From a financial and accounting perspective, it was a confusing time for us," Berry said. "But we were able to get on track, move forward and benefit from the change."

Garver went live on Deltek Vision in March 2003. Today, the system is now efficiently handling a wide range of project and financial accounting functions for Garver, including billing and payroll; human resources and timekeeping; financial and project accounting; tracking and storing employee, project and marketing-related data; and creating custom proposals to win new projects. Garver is also beginning to harness Deltek Vision to track calendar and activities for its sales and project staff.

"For us, a big part of Deltek Vision is how it stores and manages critical information," Berry said. "You can put information into a database, but if you can't get it out, it doesn't do you any good."

Deltek Vision's web-based functionality has saved the accounting team time by allowing easy access to up-to-date project and financial data. "Vision has made it possible for us to take advantage of so many opportunities in terms of planning, forecasting, data and project management—opportunities that we just weren't equipped to effectively handle before," Berry said. "For us, it's not just about saving time, but about supporting growth."

Deltek Vision also replaced the firm's previous HR system, saving thousands of dollars and countless hours of duplicate data entry as well. By using Deltek Vision to collect, store and manage all employee HR information, Garver is able to run salary and employee-related reports, conduct timekeeping and manage payroll all in one ERP system.

"Because Vision handles employee data, now our employees are more apt to change and update their personal information, because they see it right in front of them on their computer screens," Berry said. "This leads to a stronger sense of empowerment for these individuals, and it's a plus for the firm as a whole. When the employees keep their skill and resume information up-to-date, we are able to more accurately staff engineering and consulting projects with the best employees for the job."

Other HR-related benefits include enhanced timekeeping capabilities. According to Barton, the firm uses Vision to track time on projects before the projects are actually won by creating promotional project numbers.

"When employees are trying to win a project, they can now charge time to the opportunity rather than just charging time to corporate overhead," Barton said. "The value of this is a permanent record of all potential projects, so we can accurately understand

how employees are investing their time, track all past opportunities and best staff the project once it is won.”

Garver also uses Vision’s database capabilities in creative ways by writing simple programs to extract relevant data from the system and disseminate it to employees. One example is paystub information. By developing a program that extracts payroll information, the engineering firm is now able to e-mail paystubs to all employees on each payday, subsequently saving both time and paper.

Using a similar method, Garver’s intranet site can now pull non-private employee information from Vision, such as birthdays, employee pictures and similar information to promote more camaraderie and morale among its workers.

“Not only does Deltek Vision allow our employees to take greater ownership of their personal and professional data, but it also really creates a more close-knit organization all around,” Barton said.

Garver also uses Vision to run a wide variety of reports, including payroll, accounts payable, general ledger, check and voucher postings, tax information, billing, bank statements, HR and salary information, reconciliations, pipeline reports and opportunity reports for each employee and project. In addition, reports are run and broken down by regional office and distributed to each manager, so that every decision-maker has access to critical business information in order to shape accurate strategies and set realistic goals.

“Because of Deltek Vision’s intuitive reporting controls, we can literally run hundreds of reports on a monthly basis in a timely and efficient way,” Berry said. “Our end-of-month report book is literally four inches thick, because we’re able to extract all kinds of useful financial and project information from the system.”

THE DELTEK ADVANTAGE

Since its conversion to Deltek Vision in 2003, Garver Engineers has taken full advantage of the application’s web-based functionality. Vision now efficiently handles all of the firm’s project and financial accounting functions, giving employees easy access to up-to-date data from anywhere in the world. This timesaving measure has allowed Garver to better plan and forecast, ultimately supporting the firm’s growth. Vision’s HR modules also allow Garver to run salary and employee-related reports, conduct timekeeping and manage payroll all in one ERP system.

ABOUT GARVER ENGINEERS

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