Smart Devine
Acclaimed CPA Firm Turns to Deltek Maconomy to Streamline Practice Management

The Challenge
Smart Devine is an accounting, tax, business advisory, forensic accounting and litigation support firm. Ranked as one of the top 25 accounting firms by the Philadelphia Business Journal, this firm provides credible risk, litigation, compliance, financial reporting and productivity advice to a variety of clients in the greater Philadelphia area.

However, rapid growth led Smart Devine to find that its “small business systems” couldn’t keep pace with Smart Devine’s need to manage a larger, more complex organization.

Silos of disconnected information were cumbersome to use and hindered decision-making, and made reporting difficult. “We were previously using Excel, QuickBooks and a very specific, litigation-focused software package,” said Chris Barbier, Director of Technology Services at Smart Devine. “So we really had disaggregated systems. We were basically pulling information from different systems that had different pieces or silos of that data, and then manually putting it back together.”

Limited access to critical information led to additional challenges. “Likewise, only our Finance people could access the data,” Barbier continued. “If anyone needed a report, data or any kind of analysis, the finance team would have to pull that data from whichever source it came from. Between tracking and aggregating the data, sometimes it would take hours and sometimes it would take days to get back to the managing partners.”

The Solution
The need was clear: unite the firm on a single solution. Such an approach would deliver better visibility across the growing firm’s operations, and more reliable information that is easier to access for everyone. But the single platform of shared information had to work for everyone: Front-office capabilities for tasks like business-development, scoping, and resource planning, as well as back-office functions like time-&-expense capture, financial reporting, and client invoicing.

“We had a number of different key decision drivers that led us to Deltek,” said Barbier. “One is that we wanted a fully-integrated solution that could eliminate our manual processes and dependence on Excel. The second was that we really wanted something that was geared towards the CPA market. And finally, our last requirement was scalability. We doubled in size after our first year of business and had a track record of growing the firm, so we wanted a solution that we could expand to multiple locations and markets over time.”
Smart Devine turned to the Deltek Maconomy Public Accounting Solution for consistent, trusted information, and for wider visibility across the entire organization. Built specifically for the distinct client-management and billing needs of the public accounting profession, the Deltek solution brought Smart Devine a single, connected practice-management system. Across the entire organization — from business-development and engagement planning to time-collection and client invoicing — Smart Devine now has accurate status of work and people, complete visibility into client relationships, and efficiently automated administrative tasks like scoping, staffing, and billing.

**The Benefits**

**Better Information, Better Cash Flow**
Smart Devine first took advantage of Deltek Maconomy’s purpose-built reports to better understand business cash flow. Unlike the cumbersome reporting and unreliable information found among its previous disconnected systems, Deltek Maconomy’s reports could deliver Smart Devine the insight it needed to identify new revenue opportunities and ways to accelerate cash collections. Better information and more meaningful reports also had a dramatic impact on improving staff productivity, morale, and client satisfaction.

“Moreover, we really benefitted from Deltek’s Utilization Report that we couldn’t generate from our past systems,” reported Barbier. “Taking a look at utilization across departments helped us understand which of our employees were busy and which would be available. By adding that real-time data to our operation, we are now able to deploy resources much more effectively.”

**More Efficiency, More Billable Time**
Instead of disconnected processes that required duplicate steps to input redundant information, Deltek Maconomy’s integrated approach streamlined numerous administrative tasks that formerly took away time for value-added, billable work.

“Speaking from a qualitative perspective, one of our biggest benefits is our ability to get our time in faster with our employees,” stated Barbier. “It’s a measurable difference than what we had before with our disaggregated systems and time-consuming manual processes. We’ve also improved our billing cycles dramatically, and it now only takes us a few days after month-end to get our bills out. So again, this is significantly faster than what we were able to do before, and it greatly accelerated cash flow.”

**Accurate Status, Timely Communication**
Bringing all of the firm’s information and processes together brought Smart Devine an entirely new level of visibility through accurate and constantly-updated information. Unlike competitive firms stuck reviewing after-the-fact results, Deltek Maconomy brings Smart Devine the distinct advantage of real-time information: The ability to constantly monitor the status of its projects and resources, and make proactive adjustments before results are in the books.

“A lot of accounting and finance systems are backward looking, so you’re always looking historically—and by the time you get a report, it’s already happened,” Barbier explained. “With our new dashboards and key performance indicators, we are able to monitor on a daily basis and react immediately; rather than after something big has already occurred that we didn’t have the opportunity to fix. When your business is about effectively delivering on client engagements,**
“It’s absolutely critical to go back to that fixed-fee engagement and say, ‘Look we ran over time because of X, Y, and Z factors which were beyond our control. So, real-time information, prompt management, is absolutely key.’”

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delivering on time and getting everything back on track immediately if it’s off track is a huge competitive advantage for us.”

“It’s absolutely critical to go back to that fixed-fee engagement and say, ‘Look we ran over time because of X, Y, and Z factors which were beyond our control.’ But if you try to have that same conversation two months later, when you’re going back to wrap up the audit, and it’s finger-pointing at who caused what problems, forget it! You’re way too late! So, real-time information, prompt management, is absolutely key,” adds Smart Devine CEO Jim Smart.

“Best of all, we’ve now been able to interact with people at all levels of the organization,” concludes Barbier. “Deltek Maconomy has given us good, strong visibility and transparency into what’s going on with our service lines and our business as a whole. And that, above almost anything, is going to impact our business positively going forward.”

<< Jim Smart
CEO, Smart Devine

About Smart Devine

Smart Devine is an 80-person firm, ranked as one of the top 25 accounting firms by the Philadelphia Business Journal. A comprehensive financial-services provider, offerings include accounting, tax, business advisory, forensic accounting and litigation support.

www.smartdevine.com

The Deltek Advantage

Smart Devine turned to Maconomy to:
• Drive efficiency by streamlining time-wasting administrative tasks
• Gain visibility of the entire firm’s operations and client relationships
• Improve cash flow by accelerating time-collection and client invoicing

Deltek Solution: Deltek Maconomy
Public Accounting Solution