Acumatica

Cesar Chavez Foundation
www.chavezfoundation.org

COMPANY
- Location: Headquartered in CA, offices in CA, AZ, NM, TX, and WA
- Industry: Nonprofit

SOLUTION
- Acumatica Financial Management
- Acumatica Inter-Company Accounting
- NonProfitPlus

KEY RESULTS
- Empowered division managers and entities with financial dashboards
- Saved three days a month processing payroll
- Increased efficiencies and productivity, speeding quarterly closes
- Gained an affordable ERP that doesn't charge per user
- Established an adaptable cloud platform to accommodate future growth

Chavez Foundation Taps Acumatica's Multiple Entity Accounting for Growth

"I would highly recommend Acumatica to any non-profit, especially where they have multiple departments and multiple operations."

- Cliff Timmermans, CFO, Cesar Chavez Foundation

OVERVIEW

The Cesar Chavez Foundation had been running its financial systems on programs including Yardi, FundWare, QuickBooks and Excel spreadsheets. When FundWare started to reach its end of life, the Chavez Foundation sought an ERP that could handle multiple entities, automate payroll, provide financial insights, and was affordable for its multiple users. After rigorous research, they decided Acumatica was the right solution.

SITUATION

The Chavez Foundation is a complex organization offering a broad array of educational, housing, property management and other services to Latinos through a number of entities in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Washington State. It also operates two non-profit radio stations and FERNI, the Farm Workers Educational Network Inc., a for-profit entity that operates six radio stations.

The financial accounting system and payroll for 300 employees is handled manually from the foundation's main headquarters in Keene, CA, while its property management team uses Yardi, a well-known real estate investment and property management software program. An educational division ran QuickBooks, and data was moved as

necessary through Excel spreadsheets, making accounting and financial reporting complicated and prone to manual error.

Attending User Conferences Solidifies Acumatica Choice

When Cliff Timmermans, Chief Financial Officer, learned FundWare, a DOS-based non-profit accounting system that powered the foundation's main business, was reaching its end of life, he searched for a replacement. While he found basic information online, he took the additional step of attending the user conferences of his top three choices to better understand what each had to offer.

The Chavez Foundation had used FundWare since 1992, and Timmermans wanted a platform that could repeat that longevity, so he undertook an extensive evaluation of the marketplace. "We weren't certain what we really needed," he says. "Through online research and webinars, you can learn a lot but we wanted to understand the user

experience and what the software really was. These conferences steered us towards what would help us most for the next 10 to 15 years."

Pricing, a major consideration for all non-profits that watch pennies spent closely, was hard to learn online for many vendors, he says. So was the actual implementation process since some companies, like Acumatica, work with solution provider partners, while others handle the process directly.

Guiding Timmermans through the evaluation process was Bob Scott at Nims & Associates, the foundation's long time Yardi partner, who traveled to the Acumatica conference with Timmermans. "Bob was an active partner and gave me a deeper insight into implementation and using the software," Timmermans says. "One of the other big concerns I had was how to extract data from our existing programs to our future program because FundWare was DOS-based not fully Windows compatible."

SOLUTION

After evaluating NetSuite, Intacct, and Acumatica, Timmermans chose Acumatica. "Unique to Acumatica was that others based their pricing on the number of users and number of entities, which in our case was complicated to structure," he says. "By having unlimited users and not charging extra for that, Acumatica allows us to get the information out to the individual users at the operational level." Acumatica's unlimited user-licensing model was important because the Chavez Foundation has some 75 entities housed within three main entities, and Timmermans plans to extend certain access rights to Acumatica to outside auditors.

"Most accounting systems have a certain user base and don't push out additional access," he says. "We have 10 users using Acumatica now, and when we push that out to our education and radio divisions, pretty soon we'll have 50 users quickly. If had to price all those users, it would be price-prohibitive."

Subaccounts, Multiple Entities Key for Non-Profit

Timmermans also liked Acumatica's open platform, which provides non-profit compatibility, its ability to handle different entities and subaccount structure as well as the flexibility of Acumatica's accounts payable process.

"We have a rather complicated payroll by entity, by location and by jobs, so we have a whole group of different payroll activities," he says. The Chavez Foundation also draws its payroll information from two unconnected systems: one that handles HR, and the other, TimeForce, installed last year. "It previously took us four days to do payroll," he says. "Now it takes a little more than a day because of our processes, but once we get a little more polished, ideally we can do it in a day or half a day."

After completing the heavy lifting of importing historical data, implementation was smooth, Timmermans says. "Bob Scott was instrumental in this implementation. He understood our organization and when we ran into a problem, he knew the key people to go to so we didn't have to waste time figuring out that out."

BENEFITS

Saving Time with Automation

Acumatica has made the Chavez Foundation much more efficient, allowing them to spend less time on what previously were time-consuming manual accounting tasks. "We just finished our first quarterly statements which used to take us five days because everything was manual," Timmermans says. "After we get a couple more completed, we should cut that down to a day," he adds.

He looks forward to learning more about Acumatica's dashboards and arming his team with better information to run their business units. "Our education unit offers academic, community and senior services at several different sites and we want to push out administrative financial information to our department heads so

they can have the information they need to run their businesses on a day-to-day basis both on the revenue and expense side."

Permission-based Security Empower Divisions

The ability and confidence to give financial dashboards to business units stems from Acumatica's tight permission-based security. "Being able to control the correct permissions is key," he says. "With Acumatica's security we are able to isolate operational business information and give just the people involved in that operation access."

"We also plan on giving six different teams of auditors access to Acumatica to do their own testing and researching," he adds.

Timmermans says Acumatica is easy to use, very user-friendly, and flexible. The Chavez Foundation team enjoys Acumatica's search and drilldown capabilities, which allow them to find source information quickly. "When we run financial statements and produce on screen, if we have a question about a certain line item, we can drill down to the detail, which is fast and convenient."

"FundWare didn't give us those capabilities," he says. "We now have speed and access to relevant information when we need it. We were really behind the times, and now we're very far from where we were with very current software."

Acumatica's Flexibility Allows Third-Party Tool Integration

He looks forward to integrating third-party tools, such as BizNet reporting and a human resources tool, and using Acumatica to grow the Chavez Foundation in the many years ahead. "Acumatica has a good, solid GL accounting system, payroll, budgeting, the flexibility of information and dashboards that make it a very important software for us."

"It's more powerful than I envisioned," says Timmermans. "I would highly recommend Acumatica to any non-profit, especially where they have multiple departments and multiple operations."