



Customer: Natural Resources Defense Council

Website: www.nrdc.org

Customer Size: 400 employees

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Nonprofit organizations—Charities and philanthropic services

Partner: MIG & Co.

Customer Profile

Founded in 1970, the National Resource Defense Council (NRDC) works to protect the planet's wildlife and wild places and to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all living things.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Dynamics
 - Microsoft Dynamics GP
- Microsoft Forecaster
- Microsoft FRx
- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Excel
 - Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft SharePoint Server

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Conservation Nonprofit Manages Finances with Greater Speed, Accuracy, and Cohesion

“By using Microsoft Dynamics GP, we have radically improved the way that we manage our organization. We’re light years ahead of where we were before, in terms of process efficiency and our ability to track activities.”

Kathy Eason, Comptroller, Natural Resources Defense Council

Business Needs

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is the nation's most effective environmental action group, with 1.3 million members and online activists and employing more than 400 lawyers, scientists, and other professionals. The organization is highly decentralized with five regional offices in the United States and one office in Beijing, China.

As the NRDC grew, it maintained a patchwork of disconnected IT applications that increased the burden on the accounting department. “We used five systems to record financial information, track grants, and manage the financial aspects of separate projects,” says Kathy Eason, Comptroller at the NRDC. “This often meant rekeying the same information in separate applications and spending days pulling together data for reports.”

The NRDC sought to overcome these challenges by implementing a single financial-management solution that would eliminate paper-laden, manual processes;

increase accuracy and speed; and bring greater cohesion to the organization's financial management.

Solution

After investigating solutions from eight vendors, the NRDC chose Microsoft Dynamics GP as a centralized financial-management system, along with Microsoft FRx for reporting, Microsoft Forecaster for financial planning, and Microsoft SharePoint Server for widespread access to information and functionality.

Right Partner

The NRDC teamed with Microsoft Gold Certified Partner MIG & Co. to complete the implementation of Microsoft Dynamics GP. MIG specializes in business management solutions, systems integration, and business process automation. The company distinguishes itself through three core methodologies: fielding consultants with business and technology acumen, using out-of-the-box functionality where possible, and integrating with existing investments.

During its evaluation of Microsoft Dynamics GP, MIG showcased how the NRDC could save time and money by using a significant portion of the solution without customization. "We required fewer consulting hours and kept overall implementation costs low by using out-of-the-box functionality," says Eason.

The NRDC continues to work with MIG to maintain the solution and meet new business needs. For example, the NRDC and MIG worked together to upgrade to Microsoft Dynamics GP 10.0 in April 2010 and integrate it with Concur travel and expense management software.

Right Solution

By taking advantage of the transaction-tracking capabilities in Microsoft Dynamics GP, the NRDC eliminated more than half of its 120,000 individual accounts. Previously, the NRDC maintained two separate charts of accounts in its old Fundware accounting system as a way to manipulate limitations in the software.

Accounting Processes

Employees outside of the accounting department now can create purchase orders; perform vendor look-ups; and generate read-only, month-end financial statements. When employees enter information into one module in Microsoft Dynamics GP, the solution automatically updates other areas so that the accounting department can always access the latest financial information.

Grant Fund and Program Tracking

The NRDC can better manage how the organization makes use of grant funds by setting rules in the system that reflect usage guidelines. Similarly, the NRDC uses Microsoft Dynamics GP to track business practices across the organization, including many projects that were previously tracked in spreadsheets. "Information is much more

visible throughout the organization," says Eason.

More Detailed Reporting

The NRDC uses Microsoft Dynamics GP to produce financial reports, including income statements and balance sheets, for the entire organization. The accounting department distributes these reports and lobbying, litigation, and travel expenses electronically. "We offer much greater detail in our reports, including drill-down capability so that people can investigate details," says Eason. "They can easily get a detailed view of how we are using grant funds, income statements for each project, and an endowment fund report."

Benefits

With a new solution in place, the NRDC makes better use of its staff and funding resources. "By using Microsoft Dynamics GP, we have radically improved the way that we manage our organization," says Eason. "We're light years ahead of where we were before, in terms of process efficiency and ability to track activities."

Greater Speed and Accuracy

With an integrated system for financial management, the accounting department spends far less time reconciling matching accounts in different systems. "Before, staff in the accounting department had to rekey data into our financial-accounting software. Now, for example, employees enter a purchase order directly in the system and we can see when it was entered, when it was approved, and when a check was issued," says Eason. "And, because data is entered only once, there is less chance for error."

Timesavings include:

- Producing monthly financial statements for projects now takes just one day, compared to 9.6 days previously.

- Processing cash deposits previously required more than 27 days each month, but now it is automatic once an employee enters receipt data. Cash receipt reports take just three minutes.
- Reconciling endowment investment returns now takes just 1 day, compared to 5.4 days previously.
- Recording journal entries for the release of restricted funds now takes 1 day, compared to 14.8 days previously.
- Monthly grant financial statements for donors now requires only 2 days, compared to 22 days previously.

Increased Grant Funding

Because of better visibility into how the NRDC uses grant funds, the organization can release a greater portion of funds into programs. "We can more confidently allocate resources, such as assigning general administrative expenses to projects," explains Eason. "And, because we offer more detail on how we use funds, we improve our chances of receiving future grants."

Less Waste

The NRDC eliminated a significant amount of paper handling needed for processes such as cash deposits and the production of monthly project reports. "Our cash management, payroll, and reporting are now electronic," says Eason. "We've saved a significant amount in postage and paper costs, but more importantly, we are operating in line with our goal to use less paper."