



Interactive Marketing Firm Realizes Significant Savings with Accounting Solution

Overview

Country: United States
Industry: Multimedia marketing firm
Company Size: 300 employees

Key Results:

- Savings of U.S.\$500,000 in implementation costs
- Savings of \$250,000 in employee costs
- Greater efficiencies within the organization
- Improved accuracy in time tracking and billing

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Peter Massey, Vice President, Modem Media

Modem Media, an interactive marketing strategy and services firm, offers a range of interactive marketing services, including strategic consulting and research, Web site design, and interactive promotions and advertising. With nearly 300 professionals, the company realized that its current accounting system was too large and cumbersome for its needs. Modem Media partnered with Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner, NexVue Information Systems, to review and implement a more beneficial solution. Modem Media migrated its accounting and project management system to Microsoft Business Solutions–Solomon to improve internal efficiencies and accuracies as well as realize significant savings.

Customer Summary	Business Needs	Business Impact	Technology Solutions
Headquartered in Norwalk, Connecticut, Modem Media is an interactive marketing firm. The company employs nearly 300 professionals and develops interactive marketing campaigns for some of the world’s best-known brands, such as Kraft Foods, Heineken, and AOL.	Modem Media needed to simplify its accounting system to one more suited to its needs. The company wanted to address the inefficiencies and inaccuracies it has due to the larger, limited system. Modem Media also sought to realize internal cost savings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased efficiencies in time keeping and approval ▪ Significant improvement in time and billing accuracy ▪ Cost savings in implementation and ongoing system maintenance 	Modem Media partnered with NexVue to implement Microsoft® Business Solutions–Solomon to improve accounting and project management systems within the company.

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Business Needs

Modem Media had been through a difficult implementation with another system. When the time came to review and upgrade the system, the company was ready to consider other options. Previously, Modem had partnered with NexVue Information Systems in implementing Solomon for its UK operation. Because that implementation was a success and the company was pleased, Modem partnered with NexVue again. In addition, NexVue provided a unique offering with the company’s fixed fee model. NexVue gave a price and timeframe for the project, which it then guaranteed and delivered. Modem considered staying with the current system. However, NexVue and Microsoft® Business Solutions–Solomon proved to be less risky and less expensive.

By upgrading its accounting and project management solution, Modem Media wanted to reduce costs, develop some internal efficiencies, and reduce inaccuracies within the company.

Business Impact

Reduced Costs

Modem Media saved a significant amount of money by choosing Microsoft Solomon. “The money we saved on implementation has everything to do with Microsoft Business Solutions–Solomon and the capability of our implementation partner NexVue. As a result, Modem realized savings of almost \$500,000,” says Peter Massey, Vice President of Modem Media.

One of the important factors in choosing a solution was the amount of resources that the company needed to invest in to maintain it. The previous system required more dedicated employees to run and monitor the system, while Microsoft Solomon can be managed by current network administrators. In addition, Modem used existing employee skills to develop customized reporting features. IT employees could develop specialized reporting capabilities using Microsoft Access 2002 connected to the back end of Microsoft Solomon. “Microsoft Solomon does not require three employees dedicated to the solution. Current employees can manage and develop customization features, which resulted in huge immediate savings and should continue to generate savings over time,” says Massey. In fact, Modem Media has estimated the cost savings in salaries and benefits of resources saved to be U.S.\$250,000 annually.

In addition, training for Microsoft Solomon was easier than the previous solution. Also, because employees are familiar with Microsoft software and the user interface is more intuitive, employees required less training time and resources.

Increased Efficiencies

NexVue provided a methodology for the implementation project. Based on the experience and expertise of NexVue, the company created a project “playbook” for Modem Media. NexVue interviewed Modem employees and developed multiple prototypes to develop the most efficient process. Modem could then see how implementing software could also help to adopt process change and improve internal efficiencies.

Previous to migrating to Microsoft Solomon, time approval for employees was a time-consuming process that was often delayed. Because time tracking and billing were application based rather than browser based, employees had to be in the office to submit their time and give approvals. Also, the user interface was not user-friendly, which added to errors. As a result, many employees failed to record their time by the due date. In addition, once submitted, employee time would go directly to accounting, bypassing the

producer or project manager. Both were problems that led to delays in billing for the company. Accounting would have to rectify any discrepancies between projects and employee time. Because accounting is not directly involved in project work, accounting staff spent a lot of time going back and forth between the employee and the project's producer to fix errors.

With Microsoft Solomon, employees can now submit their time using a VPN client anywhere they can access the Internet. Whether employees are traveling, working from home, or out of the office for any reason, they are expected to record their billable time accurately and by the due date. In implementing Microsoft Solomon, Modem could also develop an approval hierarchy based on job titles. Every month, the producers receive reports called Estimates vs. Actuals (EvA's), which show the time recorded against their projects. If there are any discrepancies, the producer must rectify them before approving employee time and sending it on to the accounting department. This more efficient process saves time and money.

The same process is also being applied to expense reporting. Expenses used to be submitted in a paper-based process in the office. Now, employees can submit expenses even when they are out of the office, resulting in more timely billing and payment.

Improved Accuracies

Within the new Microsoft Solomon solution, Modem Media created a Work Breakdown Structure to standardize the delivery process of projects and project reporting. Modem Media has about 150 live projects at a time, so the breakdown structure provides more visibility, and the company can track specific jobs. Within the system, Modem has customized the breakdown structure with a simplified title process and also implemented filters to eliminate incorrect time credits. Before, employees had access to all jobs and tasks. Consequently, anyone could bill against any job, causing many opportunities for mistakes and incorrect entries. The standard breakdown structure of job tasks and titles means that projects are tracked more accurately and there are fewer conflicts to resolve for billing.

Modem Media has realized another benefit: more accurate planning and resource allocation. By extending the functionality of the core application to Modem's specific requirements, the company has developed customized reporting to provide more insight into actual project performance. Called Estimator, the Microsoft Access 2002-based application aligns employee titles and skills with project tasks. A producer can feed title combinations into Microsoft Solomon to create differing estimates for projects.

Using Estimator saves time because estimates go directly into Microsoft Solomon; account coordinators do not have to enter them manually. Modem Media is currently developing Assignment History, an application that will allow multiple position titles to be assigned to one employee. This will aid in tracking employees through the system and company to improve resource allocation with projects.

Finally, Modem Media is a publicly traded company required to comply with Sarbanes-Oxley regulations. With the improved accuracies using Microsoft Solomon, the company is more confident in reporting numbers and is less likely to need to restate figures.

Technology Solutions

Working with NexVue, Modem Media migrated its accounting system to Microsoft Business Solutions-Solomon. One of the keys to the implementation's success was the teamwork between the two companies. NexVue and Modem Media worked very well

Software and Services

- Microsoft® Business Solution–Solomon
- Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000
- Microsoft Access 2002

Hardware

- Dell desktops
- IBM laptops

Partner

- NexVue Information Systems



together and as one team. This solution provided a more appropriate accounting system for the interactive marketing firm. The submission and approval of employee time are conducted through the Microsoft Solomon desktop application. Finally, Modem Media worked with NexVue to develop a number of new customized features within Microsoft Solomon: Work Breakdown Structure, Assignment History, Estimator, and Change Order Tracking. The company has realized very significant cost savings and will continue to see savings over the lifetime of the solution.

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to www.microsoft.com.

For more information about NexVue Information Systems products and services, call (203) 327-0800, or visit the Web site at www.nexvue.com.

For more information about Modem Media products and services, call (203) 299-7000, or visit the Web site at www.modemmedia.com.

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