

Improving the Workflow of Annual Salary Increases at an Ivy League University

insum

Client

Ivy League University

Case Study

Services Provided

- Consulting
- Application development
- APEX DevOps Consulting

Digitizing the salary increase administration process

The salary administration process for the Department of Arts & Sciences at a major Ivy League university had gotten about as cumbersome and inefficient as anyone could possibly imagine. The system, which primarily operated via spreadsheets and emails, was manual, time-consuming, and unmanageable. They needed a tool that could maintain the salary increase workflow for approximately 1,500 faculty staff, accommodate a user base of about 100 individuals, and integrate with the university's identity management and PeopleSoft systems. The new application also needed to shorten the salary increase cycle, which typically occurred from March to June each year.

Using team augmentation to address time constraints and complexity

The Oracle Database and Application Express (APEX) developer at the university had already built some small departmental ad hoc applications that were well received. Based on that experience, he was tasked with working on an application that would address the salary administration process. But timing was critical, and the university lacked adequate team members to build such a complex system in a relatively short period of time. They needed to partner with a company that could help deliver the salary increase workflow solution on time while transferring knowledge to the IT team on APEX agile methodology and best practices that would help with future development.

To get started, the school researched various options, beginning with vendor systems that could be tweaked to accommodate their specific needs. After reviewing three different possibilities, they determined that although these systems were consistent, they were designed to handle far more situations than were actually needed in this case. It meant that considerable re-configuring would be necessary to accommodate their specific needs,

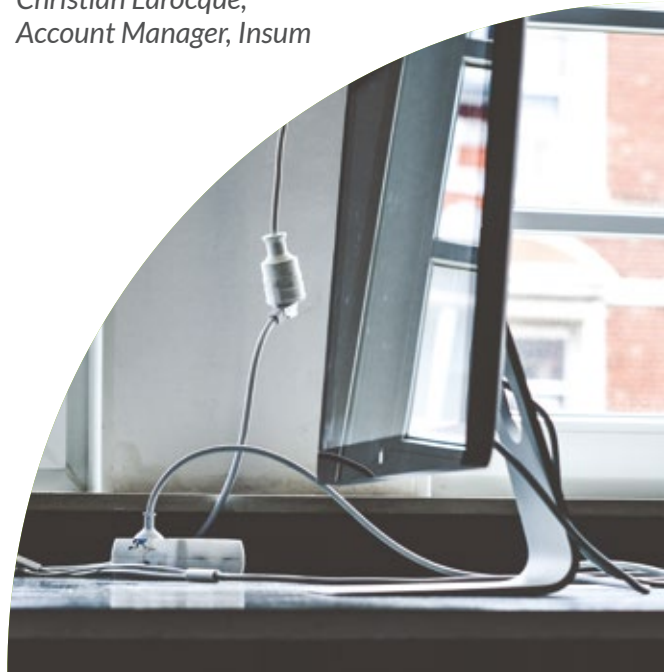
and the cost of the solutions would increase beyond reasonable. For this reason, everyone agreed that a custom solution was in order.

Selecting the right partner

The next step was to select a firm to work with. After talking with numerous companies, the university chose to work with Insum. Two reasons in particular were significant in helping make that decision. First, it was clear that while they wanted and needed to vet the company they would be partnering with, Insum was clearly mindful of the fit as well. Insum wanted to be sure it could deliver on the university's expectations and meet their overall goals, timeline and budget.

After discussing the project scope and expectations with the university's IT group, we recognized that this opportunity was particularly well adapted to Insum's capabilities. The university was looking for delivery of a high-quality system, but also valued any knowledge they could acquire during the development cycle that would help perfect their future internal project delivery capabilities.

*Christian Larocque,
Account Manager, Insum*



Second, Insum was able to offer a broad array of expertise. The consultant was able to connect with other members of the Insum team for additional input when needed, which proved to be extremely beneficial.

Insum's team approach culture was beyond helpful. It was clear from the beginning that not only were we working with our lead consultant individually, but we were working with Insum collectively.

*Lead Client Developer,
Ivy League University*

At the same time, the university needed to partner with a company that could also provide coaching and training services in the midst of a real-life scenario. "There are 100 ways to solve a problem and all of them have a level of complexity," the lead client developer said. "Insum was careful to pitch those solutions so, although they would be a stretch for me at the time, they were something I could easily accommodate and understand. I have done that successfully, and since then I have repeatedly used things I learned from that project."

Racing against time in the face of data integration and accessibility roadblocks

To be successful, a number of challenges had to be overcome. First, because the salary process happens once each year, the developers faced a tight timeline for delivering a solution. If they missed that window of time, they would be forced to wait another year. It was important to work with a consultant who understood this challenge and knew whether it was realistic to overcome it. Next, the institutional data had to be obtained from a couple of external systems and integrated into a central source. And finally, while they needed to develop a solution that could quickly adapt to changes—from

new hires to promotions—they also needed to display that information in a format that users could easily understand.

Delivering a user-friendly, stress-free result

Once the new Annual Salary Increase Process (ASIP) was in place and integration with PeopleSoft was complete, the amount of time spent on the application was drastically reduced.

The time needed to administer the salary increase workflow decreased from requiring most of two people's time to very little of one person's time. It also shortened the salary increase cycle for future years.

*Lead Client Developer,
Ivy League University*

The decision to develop a custom application with APEX proved to be a good one. It required less time to develop and it successfully addressed the specific issue at hand. The team approach was a success as well. "Working with Insum felt very much like a partnership. I felt like we were engaged with the individual consultant who we worked with directly, and also with Insum since our account manager would periodically check in as necessary throughout the life of the project," said the lead client developer.

Today, ASIP has completely eliminated the manual work and any stress associated with it. Users have easy access

to a system that can quickly adapt to changes. And because the university has complete autonomous control over the custom software, those changes can take place whenever the need arises.

Working with Insum was the perfect partnership. Their technical acumen helped us build an end result that provided the least amount of complexity with the maximum amount of functionality. You enjoy working with them because their warm and engaging culture shines through. And that stuff matters.

Lead Client Developer,
Ivy League University

It's hard to believe that we designed, developed, and delivered such a sophisticated application in only a few months. It is truly impressive that we were able to build an application to handle these complex transactional processes (and HR data is as complex as administrative data gets) so that it works elegantly and efficiently to get the right information to the right people at the right time. It's what we all hope for from an administrative system, and I think the ASIP application is the best homegrown application I've seen at the university.

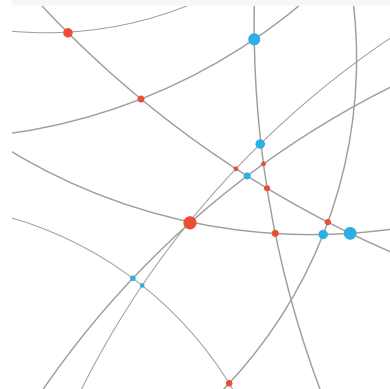
Director of Analytics
and Compensation,
Ivy League University



About Insum

Insum develops highly effective business applications with Oracle Application Express (APEX), which is included in the Oracle database. We're the world's leading APEX consulting and development firm.

To learn more about us: www.insum.ca.



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