



Case Study

Faith-Based Nonprofit Diocese of La Crosse Achieves Significant Time Savings with Abila MIP Advance™ and Soft Trac, LLC

Company Profile | Diocese of La Crosse



The Diocese of La Crosse is a Catholic organization in Wisconsin.

About

- Annual Revenue of \$10 million
- 70 employees
- Multiple Entities

The processes within the department have become much less cumbersome and easier to manage. When reviewing and analyzing the month, it is easy to drill into the transactions which makes finding answers much easier and less time consuming.

Marie – Finance Officer



Business Situation

The Diocese of La Crosse was utilizing an AS/400 system running obsolete and unsupported proprietary software. All accounting was paper-based, with output printing on green-bar paper from an impact printer. The staff was faced with taking a technological leap in terms of both hardware and software. For their existing chart of accounts, general ledger, accounts receivable, accounts payable, and all financial reporting, this equated to “starting from scratch”. Payroll was outsourced to a third-party CPA firm. Staff undertook an investigation into a cloud-based solution to manage their CORE financials and HR functions.

Project Scope

Some of the challenges with the AS/400 system and Microsoft Excel addressed by the project scope included:

- The challenge of an obsolete software application running on dated hardware was embraced enthusiastically by exploring a cloud-based accounting solution. The company no longer would be faced with the expense and effort of modernizing and maintaining dated hardware and software.
- Too much paper: all invoicing and checks were printed to paper and mailed. The Diocese now processes accounts receivable invoicing and statements of account via email. In addition to a more paperless office, staff time is saved in the preparation and mailing of invoices. With regard to accounts payable, many vendors now receive a notification of payment of invoices. Those payments are done electronically with the help of the Abila MIP™ EFT module.
- The Diocese uses Abila MIP to manage two entities, the Diocese of La Crosse and St. Joseph’s Priest Fund. These two entities have differing employee pay schedules; benefit and leave plans; and vendors and customers. The resolution to manage the two different entities was to provide two separate databases with the same chart of accounts structure, but with respective employees, vendors and customers. The staff benefits from using the same technology and structure, while maintaining separate processing and reporting functionality.
- The chart of accounts and vendor databases contained many duplicates. The table-based chart of accounts structure consolidated many general ledger accounts and provided a practicable financial reporting environment.
- A multitude of Microsoft Excel spreadsheets have been replaced by deploying Abila MIP, with the added benefit of increasing internal controls.



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Solution

Abila MIP Advance was implemented in a two-phased approach: (1) core modules; and (2) HR, EWS and payroll modules. Soft Trac went through a thorough discovery process including review of setup required to meet the Diocese of La Crosse reporting needs. Implementation of a consolidated and streamlined Chart of Accounts resulted in more flexible reporting.

Additional process flow improvements were implemented and the Diocese of La Crosse was set up to take advantage of the many paperless options available throughout the MIP application including:

- Sending AR Invoices and Customer Statements via E-Mail
- Paying Vendors Electronically and email notifications of pending payments
- Setting up Automated Benefit and Leave Plans
- Reporting Employee Time Online via the Electronic Web Services (EWS) Module
- Implementing of Direct Deposit and Payment Vouchers
- Tax reporting on payroll activity

Benefits

Diocese of LaCrosse is now saving 47.5 hours a month of staff time allowing them to focus on other tasks. Some of the key benefits realized by implementing the Abila MIP Advance system included:

- Automated vendor payments and payment notifications through use of the EFT for AP module. This has eliminated the need for a third-party CPA firm, and has gone from a three day process to that of two hours.
- Achieved 100% accuracy in the first run of 1099-MISC and 1099-R processing, which was filed electronically with the MIP Aatrix interface.
- Reduced reliance on paper through use of electronic file management.
 - Accounts receivable invoicing and statements of account. What used to consume approximately 8 hours per month is now completed in 2.5 hours.
 - Accounts payable could consume up to 16 hours per week, but is now completed in approximately 4 hours.
 - Payroll Processing, even when outsourced, would take 12 hours of staff time from start to finish. Now the entire process takes around 4 hours. Direct deposit with customized payment vouchers has eliminated the paper remittances and now all staff receive their payroll remittances via email.
 - Automation of benefit and leave plans. All of this has been set up in the human resource module and has eliminated the use of spreadsheets and manual updating after each payroll.
 - Eliminated manual, paper-based time reporting process through the implementation of Employee Web Services (EWS) module.
 - Financial statements and month-end reporting has greatly reduced paper waste and time spent sorting and distributing the reports.

Products and Services Used

Diocese of La Crosse purchased Abila MIP Advance Cloud Subscription Service. Soft Trac worked with the Diocese of La Crosse to provide consultation, training, project management and support services. Their staff were fully trained on the software modules allowing them to perform their daily tasks. Training was provided remotely.

While a bit apprehensive at first of the coming changes to our accounting system, it has become quite evident that change was necessary. The workflow and work load have become much more manageable and intuitive.

The training and project management provided by Soft Trac were top-notch and made the transition much more comfortable.

Kurt – Staff Accountant

