Case Study

Environmental Nonprofit Earthwatch Institute Improves Automation with Abila MIP Fund Accounting™ and Soft Trac, LLC

Company Profile | EarthWatch Institute

Mission Statement

Earthwatch engages people worldwide in scientific field research and education to promote the understanding and action necessary for a sustainable environment.

About

- Originally established in 1971 as Educational Expeditions International.
- Offices throughout the world including the United States, United Kingdom, India, Hong Kong, Japan, Australia, and Brazil.
- Enable scientific field research and promote education.

> **Soft Trac was clear and concise with their instructions, direction and training, and very efficient in the use of their time and in the use of ours.**
> ❝

Business Situation

Earthwatch Institue was using Fundware version 7.60.1007. They were experiencing issues with Fundware around reporting, budgeting and project accounting. Management wanted improved ability to more easily drill-down into the data by grant, category, and other segments.

Project Scope

Earthwatch Institute faced many challenges with Fundware. The application was soon to be retired.
Goals with the Abila MIP™ implementation included:

1. Reduce manual work;
2. Consolidate multiple Excel based spreadsheets into Abila MIP modules and reporting;
3. Automate and streamline processes;
4. Produce reports by segments including Department, Project, Fund Source, Restriction and GL.
5. Allow program and department managers to more easily view and their own departmental datain order to have more control. *"I love that I can look expenses up myself. I never liked needing to bother finance every month. Now I can answer all my questions."*

Solution

Soft Trac went through a thorough discovery process regarding setup required to achieve current and future reporting needs and process flow improvements.
Complete Data Conversion services were also provided during which the following occurred:

- Reduced Chart of Accounts from more than 15,000 to 200 GLs while maintaining the integrity of project tracking via additional segments;
- Defined mapping from old GL format to new streamlined GL structure in Abila MIP;
- Imported beginning balances and historical transactions to allow for immediate year over year comparative reporting;
- Created several import processes to significantly reduce manual work hours including imports to automate payroll and deposits *"Importing payroll has been saving 20 min+ of time per payroll run, because (they are able to) spend less time double-checking."*

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Benefits

The completed project was on time and under budget!
Increase in staff efficiency by reducing Finance staff human resource hours included,

- Executive View Users now have access to information that previously was only available through contact with finance office staff. In addition, managers now experience real-time transparency. *"Those managers utilizing the drilldown capability feature love it and they don't need to bother finance with questions each month."*
- The import processes replaced the manual keying of data saving hours of staff time per year.
- Reporting and look-ups are much more flexible and support ad hoc reporting which previously could only be done in Excel.
- Monthly financial reports are still produced in Excel but can be linked easily to exports from Abila MIP.
- Budgets and forecasts can be updated and reported against. New programs can be added to the forecast.
- Adding new programs has become much less time consuming, since it no longer requires adding dozens of new GL accounts
- Pledge receivables, which previously were tracked in a very large Excel spreadsheet, are now tracked within Abila MIP resulting in improved visibility, audit-ability and accuracy.

New capabilities include,

- For the first time, 1099s are created directly from finance office data in an automated manner. As a result, the Earthwatch Staff experienced efficiencies in the production of their 1099's. *"Much easier (to produce 1099s). Infinitely less stress. Night and day from how it was done in Fundware."*
- 990 Worksheets are produced directly from Abila MIP to assist with IRS compliance.
- Increased internal controls now exist due to the transition of hundreds of pages of Excel spreadsheets into reports produced directly from Abila MIP financial data.

Products and Services Used

Earthwatch Institute purchased Abila MIP Fund Accounting™ and installed it on-premise. Soft Trac worked with Earthwatch Institute to provide consultation, training, project management and support services. Staff were fully trained on the software modules allowing them to perform their daily tasks. Training was provided both onsite and remotely.

(It is) much easier to find discrepancies using Abila than with Fundware. (It was) almost impossible to do some reconciliations in Fundware that (only) take a couple of hours in Abila. "

All quotes included in this case study were provided by Larry Staub, Controller and the Earthwatch Institute finance team.