



Growing Charity Expands Services, Reduces Costs with Integrated CRM and ERP Solution

Overview

Country or Region: United States
Industry: Nonprofit organizations—Charities and philanthropic services

Customer Profile

Lifeworks serves a steadily growing number of individuals with disabilities and their families by providing connections with employers and offering essential support services.

Business Situation

The organization wanted to minimize administrative costs, gain the ability to serve more people with greater results, and make its employees more effective in their jobs.

Solution

Lifeworks implemented Microsoft Dynamics CRM, upgraded Microsoft Dynamics SL, and extended the solutions with customized capabilities to streamline business operations.

Benefits

- Increased service capacity in customized support by 26 percent without adding employees
- Exceeded organizational goals for reducing administrative costs
- Simplified regulatory compliance and reporting
- Improved client service levels

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Judy Lysne, Chief Executive Officer, Lifeworks

A growing nonprofit organization with a mission to serve people with disabilities and their families, Lifeworks wants to minimize administrative costs and act on any opportunity to enhance the quality and scope of its services. Older technology was not keeping up with the organization’s complex requirements and had become expensive to operate. Lifeworks worked with Microsoft Gold Certified Partners PowerObjects and Boyer & Associates to implement Microsoft Dynamics CRM, upgrade Microsoft Dynamics SL, and integrate Microsoft Dynamics CRM with Microsoft Dynamics SL. PowerObjects and Boyer & Associates also extended the solutions with custom functionality. With new efficiencies, a far lower cost of technology ownership, and the ability to extend the solutions with its own resources, Lifeworks has maintained low costs during a period of rapid growth in demand for its services.



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Christopher Huerta, Vice President of Information Technology, Lifeworks

Situation

Located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, [Lifeworks](#) was founded in 1965 by a group of families with a shared vision of helping people with disabilities across the state lead fuller lives. Lifeworks builds relationships with employers, families, and government agencies to provide a growing and increasingly complex range of services to those with disabilities and their kin. One major focus of the charity is to help families hire staff to come into their homes and help care for children with disabilities. This allows children to continue to live at home, gives families a way to balance work and personal lives, and conserves public funding. A second major program connects employers with reliable, capable workers who have disabilities.

Lifeworks maintains relationships with approximately 750 adults and 1500 families that include children with disabilities. Revenue from Medicaid has increased from U.S.\$12 million annually in the year 2000 to \$50 million today. In recent years, the organization's needs have changed because the number of individuals and families served has grown and the services that the state of Minnesota provides to people with disabilities have expanded. Lifeworks faced more and more involved tasks in managing the high volume of transactions and complying with increasingly complex federal, state, and county regulatory and reporting requirements associated with its programs.

Data Integrity Concerns and Inefficient Systems

Lifeworks was using Onyx CRM to help manage the important relationships with individuals, families, employers, volunteers, and donors. However, this software accommodated records of these groups of people in separate databases. In addition, it was not equipped to support the charity's

complex program and financial management needs. Onyx CRM was not integrated with an older version of Microsoft Dynamics SL, which Lifeworks used as an accounting system, nor with other business software. When interactions occurred between the charity and families, employers, volunteers, or donors, Lifeworks employees had to enter the same information repeatedly into different systems. Human error resulted, and key financial details would sometimes differ from one system to the next. Christopher Huerta, Vice President of Information Technology at Lifeworks, comments, “We often questioned the integrity of our data. It was most difficult for our staff to keep all of the separate systems up-to-date.”

At the same time, owning and maintaining the organization's software systems was expensive and labor-intensive. By using Onyx CRM, the organization incurred significant annual expenses for license renewal and support. What's more, Lifeworks was not able to customize the software and fit it closer to its actual needs without taking recourse to expensive consulting resources.

Operational Challenges

Lifeworks also faced challenges in supporting families who wanted to hire their own staff to help care for children with disabilities. The charity identifies and screens in-home healthcare workers for these families, manages their payroll, bills funding agencies for medical supplies, and tracks and reports all expenditures to the state or county agency involved. Families spread across several counties used a manual system to turn in daily time cards, which Lifeworks employees processed. As the number of families participating in the program continued to grow, managing the program became a time-consuming

process that was inefficient and risky because of potential errors.

Lifeworks's sales associates, who are responsible for identifying employers willing to hire people with disabilities, were finding it difficult to track and convert leads. Individual employees kept information about leads on their own spreadsheets, making it difficult for the team to collaborate and avoid duplicate lead qualification and conversion efforts. That, in turn, increased the time it took to connect individuals with disabilities with employment opportunities.

Renewed Focus on Organizational Objectives

Lifeworks decided to replace the charity's outdated Onyx system with a new solution that would help reduce inefficiencies, enable employees to be more effective, ease compliance with public-funding regulations, and support the increase in people served and the complexity of the organization's service portfolio.

Solution

Lifeworks initially considered upgrading the existing Onyx system, but ultimately decided to implement [Microsoft Dynamics CRM](#) and upgrade [Microsoft Dynamics SL](#). Lifeworks believed that Microsoft Dynamics CRM could help the charity more effectively manage its relationships with families, employers, donors, and volunteers and that Microsoft Dynamics SL could support the charity's rapidly expanding transaction-based programs and serve as its accounting system. Says Huerta, "We were attracted to the flexibility of the Microsoft Dynamics solutions and their ability to foster efficiencies that would help keep administrative costs down. We also found it would cost us less to deploy the Microsoft Dynamics CRM solution than to upgrade our Onyx software."

To implement Microsoft Dynamics CRM and perform many of the needed systems integrations, Lifeworks turned to [PowerObjects](#), a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner that focuses solely on Microsoft Dynamics CRM. Says Huerta, "PowerObjects made it clear that they were interested in our business and would take the time to work with us. What's more, they showed us that using the xRM application development framework within Microsoft Dynamics CRM would enable us to take control of the solution and adjust it to our changing requirements."

Accurate Data from a Single Source

For Lifeworks employees, entering information once rather than multiple times increases accuracy, simplifies workflows, and saves time. The charity set up a Web-based portal for taking donations, from which information flows into Microsoft Dynamics CRM and into the accounting system in Microsoft Dynamics SL. Using one consolidated database lets Lifeworks introduce automation to trigger payments and reimbursements prompted by transactions.

Microsoft Gold Certified Partner Boyer & Associates worked closely with PowerObjects to integrate Microsoft Dynamics CRM and Microsoft Dynamics SL. Boyer & Associates also helped to ensure that this integration would allow Lifeworks to achieve its goal of simplifying billing.

Efficient information management through Microsoft Dynamics CRM helps Lifeworks to comply effectively with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and other federal, state, and county regulations. "Many of the funded services require us to notify families when they are overbudget or underbudget within a specific time frame," says Huerta. "The new solution ensures compliance by

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preventing entry of time against families' budgets if they bump up against the budget allocation limits. Furthermore, we are able to produce reports and generate letters to families who are not spending their budgets at a consistent rate.”

Automated, Consistent Processes

PowerObjects took advantage of the xRM framework to fit the solution as closely as possible to Lifeworks's operation. The project included a new time-reporting capability to support the Lifeworks program that provides payroll and funding management services for families hiring in-home workers. These families now enter hired workers' time sheets through a Web browser, from where they transition to records within Microsoft Dynamics CRM and Microsoft Dynamics SL, relieving much of the administrative burden from the charity's employees.

Efficient Development of Business Applications

The Lifeworks IT team uses expertise gained from its engagement with PowerObjects to obtain important technological capabilities without having to rely on outside resources for IT solutions. This approach reduces costs while ensuring timely application development. The charity continues to use the xRM platform in Microsoft Dynamics CRM to extend the solution. In a recent effort, Lifeworks enhanced the ability of sales representatives by creating a custom application to manage communications and outreach to potential employers with greater efficiency, capturing, tracking, and sharing all lead details within a single system.

Benefits

Increased Service Capacity in Customized Support by 26 Percent Without Adding Employees

With an integrated business management solution that combines Microsoft Dynamics CRM and Microsoft Dynamics SL with custom capabilities and extensions that Lifeworks developed with support from PowerObjects and Boyer & Associates, the organization has been able to maintain its goals for control of administrative costs and is acting on opportunities to boost service quality. “We can serve more people in the community more effectively,” says Huerta. “Even better, we accomplish this at the same time that we maintain a reasonable overhead.”

The increased functionality that Lifeworks gained through Microsoft Dynamics CRM, laid the foundation for implementing a Web-based time-entry system for families. Being able to capture time over the Web allowed Lifeworks to move 30 percent of its client families to this more efficient method in the first six months. The goal for 2010 is reaching 50 percent Web-based time entry. In addition, the organization will be able to offer the tool to more families in the future without adding new employees to support the program. “The families are incredibly excited about being able to submit and view their information and access reports at any time,” says Huerta.

The charity has seen similar efficiencies in its ability to manage the families' budgets and manage hiring processes for them. By working in a more flexible and comfortable software environment, service coordinators complete tasks faster and with greater accuracy than was possible with the previous system.

Exceeded Organizational Goals for Reducing Administrative Costs

By using Microsoft Dynamics CRM and Microsoft Dynamics SL, Lifeworks has eliminated the high support and license costs of the previous system. In addition, the organization now performs system customizations and extensions on its own, avoiding the expense of hiring consultants. What's more, Huerta points out, "Microsoft offers very generous business conditions to not-for-profit organizations like Lifeworks."

Lifeworks continues to control costs with the integrated Microsoft Dynamics business management infrastructure. "The new solution has played a key role in helping us reduce administrative costs," says Judy Lysne, Chief Executive Officer at Lifeworks. "Every dollar saved is a dollar we can spend to help a person with disabilities lead a better life."

Simplified Regulatory Compliance and Reporting

After implementing an integrated, comprehensive business management solution, Lifeworks has uncovered the advantages of simplified reporting from a centralized, dependable data source. "We now have one version of the truth," says Huerta. "We provide information to clients, employers, and state and county government agencies with complete confidence in the validity of the data."

Enhanced reporting and information management extends to easier regulatory compliance, including grants management and other requirements. Lifeworks also can better control who is able to view confidential client information, which is an important HIPAA requirement. "Microsoft Dynamics CRM within our integrated business technology helps us take care of the fundamentals of our operation," says Huerta. "Our people can focus more on

expanding services to people with disabilities and providing the best possible service quality to the community."

Improved Client Service Levels

Lifeworks experiences enhanced efficiencies, which have resulted in even better service quality in many aspects of the operation. For example, the custom lead management application that Lifeworks developed by using the xRM framework has made it possible to eliminate many duplicate efforts, made employee collaboration more immediate, and enabled sales representatives to connect workers with employment opportunities sooner. Doing so can make a vast positive difference in the quality of individuals' and families' lives and help employers fill open positions with qualified workers.

Says Huerta, "We expect to generate more advantages for our clients, our donors, and the employers as we continue to explore the efficiencies and productivity enhancements possible with our infrastructure of Microsoft Dynamics solutions."

Additional Resources

- [Microsoft Dynamics CRM technology overview](#)
- [Microsoft Dynamics CRM community page](#)
- [Microsoft Dynamics for not-for-profit organizations](#)
- [Microsoft Dynamics SL technology overview](#)
- [PowerObjects CRM blog](#)

For More Information

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For more information about Lifeworks services, call (651) 454-2732 or visit the Web site at:

www.lifeworks.org

For more information about PowerObjects products and services, call (612) 339-3355 or visit the Web site at:

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For more information about Boyer & Associates products and services, call (763) 412-4300 or visit the Web site at:

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Microsoft Dynamics

Microsoft Dynamics is a line of integrated, adaptable business management solutions that enables you and your people to make business decisions with greater confidence. Microsoft Dynamics works like familiar Microsoft software such as Microsoft Office, which means less of a learning curve for your people, so they can get up and running quickly and focus on what's most important. And because it is from Microsoft, it easily works with the systems that your company already has implemented. By automating and streamlining financial, customer relationship, and supply chain processes, Microsoft Dynamics brings together people, processes, and technologies, increasing the productivity and effectiveness of your business, and helping you drive business success.

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