

Finding the Right Accounting Software Fit

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Tim Stanton
Business Manager
Fulton County Courthouse



Pennsylvania’s Fulton County is located in the Appalachian Mountains of south central Pennsylvania, along Maryland’s state line, with an approximate land area of 435 square miles and a 2000 population of 14,261. The county’s gentle, rolling mountains and green fertile valleys offer an escape from today’s faster-paced way of life. And while Fulton County takes pride in its rural nature, it is centrally located in southern Pennsylvania - a two-hour drive from Harrisburg, Penn., Baltimore, and Washington, D.C., and three hours from Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

The Fulton County Courthouse building and annex are home to many of the county’s departments and services, including its three County Commissioners, Daniel Swain, Bonnie Mellott Keefer, and Ellis Yingling, and its business manager, Tim Stanton.

GASB Woes

First passed in 1999, Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) 34 mandates are now part of every city and county government’s financial reporting and accounting practices. GASB 34 posed a challenge for Fulton County, requiring a revamp in the form and substance of their financial reports.

“We knew changing our accounting methodology would require information not previously collected,

plus financial statements that would help measure operational accountability on an accrual basis,” explains Stanton. “To meet the latter requirement, we needed GASB 34-compliant accounting software.” Between 2004 and 2007, Fulton County changed accounting systems twice. “The older system, used for decades, was proprietary and character-based,” says Stanton. “We paid a substantial fee for each machine added to the system, plus the system was available only through a leased line with the company that wrote the software.”

The county’s ideal accounting package would allow for cost-effectively putting all departments on the system. After the older, proprietary system, they tried another vendor’s Windows-based system. It didn’t work well either.

Stanton credits Commissioners Swain, Keefer, and Yingling for their leadership and support in obtaining a proper financial software solution “to maintain our financially healthy county.”

Stanton conducted an Internet search in July 2006. After choosing Sage Software’s Sage MIP Fund Accounting, he selected NonProfit Technologies, Inc. to handle implementation, because “the company specializes in nonprofits and understands the needs of

government entities, plus they didn't simply recommend the most expensive system they sell, but rather the system meeting our unique needs."

Stanton says Fulton County chose Sage MIP because "the Sage solution is not only cost-effective, both in up-front costs and annual maintenance costs, but also easy to install, learn, and use. Sage also has a large installed base, which was important to us."

Rapid Return on Investment

Fulton County went live with the software in January 2007, and, within a short time, experienced benefits.

"Because Sage MIP offers user security, department heads have real-time information about their budgets and departmental performance," says Stanton. "There's no more waiting until month's end for a hard copy report. Security within the software restricts users from seeing another department's information."

Another benefit, says Stanton, is a faster accounts payable (AP) process. "The previous process required that AP invoices be sent to a central location for keying and check distribution," he explains. "With our limited staff, this process resulted in a payment processing bottleneck. User security and remote access allows

each department to key their own invoices. Then, an edit report is printed and attached to the invoices, which are sent to the business office for review, posting, and check distribution. The review and approval process maintains its integrity, while process time is decreased."

Soon, Fulton County's new software will help eliminate duplicate software. Its Services for Children Department is required to report transactions using different charts of accounts for Pennsylvania's Public Welfare and Community and Economic Development departments. Currently, Services for Children tracks accounting transactions on three different accounting systems, and then reconciles them to match the needs required by each reporting entity.

"Using the flexibility of Sage MIP, we designed a program to convert the chart required by Community and Economic Development, to the chart required by Public Welfare," says Stanton. "This system is currently being tested. When successfully implemented, we'll eliminate two duplicate accounting systems."

We Focus On Your Success.



Financial Accounting Systems
Installation & Integration
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Training & Support

NonProfit Technologies, Inc. (NPT)

NPT understands the unique needs of the public sector and has dedicated its entire business to addressing those needs since 1996. We are a business and technology solutions provider with over 40 locations and nearly 700 public sector clients nationwide. We help federal, state, and local government agencies and nonprofit organizations, including schools, human and social service agencies, religious organizations, museums, and libraries achieve their missions.

NPT provides expert, certified implementation, customization, and integration of industry leading nonprofit accounting software - Sage MIP Fund Accounting and Sage Fundraising 50. Our expertise has been acknowledged through our selection to the Sage Chairman's Club, President's Circle, Million Dollar Club, and as a Sage Select Authorized Partner. NPT is also a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner as well as being the publisher of Gazelle, a complimentary product to Sage MIP fund accounting software specifically designed for Workforce Development Boards and Economic Development organizations.

We also offer a number of training and support services designed to maximize your knowledge of your software and empower you throughout the implementation of our solutions. At NPT, we strive to provide business solutions that exceed your expectations on-time, on budget, and with the functionality we've promised. If you are interested in learning more about NPT's solutions please contact Tammy Massey at 800.404.9758 ext. 8123, at tammy@cpaz.com, or visit us on the web at www.cpaz.com.



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