Seventh-day Adventists build efficiency with Infor SunSystems

Facts at a glance

Product: Infor SunSystems, Infor Query & Analysis
Industry: Nonprofit
Country: Worldwide (USA Headquarters)

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>
> —**Ray Wahlen, Director, Accounting Software, Seventh-day Adventists**

About the company

As a global Protestant denomination active in more than 200 countries, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is committed to spreading the message of hope. Sharing the gospel is primary, but the church's message is also holistic. Believing in spiritual and physical health, the Adventists emphasize practical faith, providing humanitarian aid to disaster victims and creating sustainable development in low-resource regions. The church operates thousands of schools, hospitals, and publishing houses. Members teach living skills, provide health care, and supply resources and vital organizational support. Headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland, the Adventists make education accessible to everyone. To learn more, visit www.adventist.org.

Setting the strategy

As a nonprofit organization, the Seventh-day Adventist Church endeavors to use the donations it receives in the most effective way possible through its preaching, teaching, and healing ministries. After years of using internally produced software that had been effective but varied among its more than 1,500 sites around the world, the financial team sought to implement a standardized, worldwide financial solution to gain operational efficiencies and find a balance between fulfilling local and worldwide needs and requirements. The objective was to find a flexible solution for use in a nonprofit setting in every location in the world, and to stay up-to-date with current platforms, operating systems, and databases.

Carl Friday, core configuration manager at the Seventh-day Adventist Church world headquarters, explains: "We were looking for a flexible toolbox to serve as the foundation for a worldwide core financial solution. It needed an inner structure that could work with three-way multicurrency features, multilingual capabilities, and inter-organizational transactions." Ray Wahlen, director for accounting software at the church, adds, "Most of our organizations are technically independent, but we work closely with one another in accomplishing our mission. With some areas of the world being relatively affluent and others lacking, we share resources, transferring funds as needed. And with a wide variety of organizational sites-some with one financial staff member and others with up to 50-the solution also needed to have scalability. We wanted one versatile solution that could be effective at every site."

Getting business specific

In selecting a new financial solution, Adventists wanted a vendor that had financial stability with a worldwide presence, expertise in the not-for-profit industry, and an established, long-term vision for its products. Wahlen explains: "When we looked at solution companies and mentioned our multicurrency and multilanguage needs, Infor™ was the only one left standing. Infor SunSystems and Infor Query & Analysis solutions were the best choice to meet all of our requirements. We also learned that Financials Business has a large customer base in over 190 countries."

Other key differentiators contributed to the Infor choice. "In addition to its flexibility to customize for our various environments and its ability to provide a standardized core financial product, lower total cost of ownership factored into our decision," says Wahlen. "We also found a responsive development team with Infor, which kept the core development team and programmers from its legacy company."

Seeing results

Implementation of Infor SunSystems and Infor Query & Analysis for the Adventist Church will be organization-wide. The goal is to complete deployment of both solutions concurrently at 80% of its more than 1,500 sites around the world. According to Wahlen, implementation at each site takes just a few weeks. "We're establishing standardized processes while deploying the solutions. We've already established a standardized chart of accounts and standard analysis dimensions. Our biggest challenge is that these organizations are all so different, varying from schools to hospitals and from publishing houses to food industries."

"Financials Business toolbox functionality and analysis structure is crucial to our success in addressing various needs," Friday adds. "We've established eight standard analysis ledger dimensions as core worldwide values and allowed two for localized customization to enable further analysis at each site."

In addition to the basic financial package, Adventists use several modules, including Financials Business with asset register and purchasing capabilities, as well as Infor Query & Analysis. The integrated solutions have been critical to the organization's success, enabling a host of operational efficiencies. "Query & Analysis allows us to easily import data into Financials Business from diverse sources-spreadsheets and flat files," Wahlen says. "We've gained significant efficiencies in many areas, especially data entry, with the single-entry format that changes dynamically, based on needs. We've also been able to streamline worldwide interorganizational transactions and are working to further streamline, passing more and more data electronically."

Infor Query & Analysis users are able to rapidly import hundreds of lines of transactions at one time from other databases and other vendors. "That has saved us tremendous time and energy for more value-added work," Wahlen says.

"Financial statement production is an automated process in Query & Analysis. It's interactive, allowing drilldown and slicing and dicing, providing greater transparency into finances. Our financial managers love it. We can produce a standard financial report among all organizations, while allowing each organization to easily generate the same financial information in a different format, if necessary, to comply with local governmental requirements."

Wahlen adds that Adventists have saved costs by reassigning some personnel due to solution efficiencies and optimizing those who are well trained. "Some sites have been able to assume more responsibilities, so we've increased productivity while cutting costs."

Another challenge is that the organization requires various styles of financial statements because of its administrative, hospital, and educational institutions, all with their supporting industries, which requires both profit and nonprofit capabilities. "The combination of Query & Analysis and SunSystems' analysis capabilities allowed us to successfully apply financial statements and other reports that are relevant to that entity's industry," Wahlen says. "That greater flexibility provides us with confidence that we can meet any site's needs-and we have."

In summary, Infor SunSystems and Infor Query & Analysis have helped the Adventist Church by providing for:

- Fast implementation at each site while establishing standardized, streamlined processes across the organization, despite vastly different site requirements

- Seamless data sharing, creating significant efficiency gains in many areas through automated processes-improving productivity while saving costs

- Greater flexibility in producing automated financial reports and other business information quickly, including applying profit and nonprofit capabilities to meet any localized need, with resulting improved transparency and organizational governance

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About Infor

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