



Port of Kalama Centralizes Entire Operation with Sage 300 and Equation Technologies

Customer

Port of Kalama

Industry

Municipal Government

Challenge

An outdated DOS-based system with no integration capabilities.

Solution

Equation Technologies migrated Port of Kalama to Sage 300 resulting in streamlined dockage fees and easier processing.

Results

- Tax payment process reduced from hours each month to 15 minutes with complete accuracy
- Detailed documentation of work flow
- Reduced number of data input errors

With the help of Equation Technologies' excellent technical and accounting skills, the Port of Kalama has reduced errors and manual entry while increasing productivity with streamlined workflow within Sage 300. The Port of Kalama has been operating on the Columbia River since it was organized in 1920. The Port provides a wide range of services to local residents, visitors and the business community. From industrial property leases and dockage fees to operating a marina and dredging and selling sand, the Port had its hands full with managing their various lines of revenues and complying with the necessary taxing authorities.

The Right Partner

Limping along on an outdated DOS-based system with no integration forced the Port to maintain data outside of the system. Poor reporting and a lack of training rounded out the issues that the Port needed to resolve to maximize efficiencies and centralize their entire operation in one system. The Port interviewed several companies to help, but it was not until Liz Newman, executive assistant, met Equation Technologies that she knew she found the right company. "Right from the first meeting we knew they were different," said Liz. "They emphasized that they wanted a long-term relationship with us. Their system knowledge, experience with integration and ability to provide remote support was outstanding." Equation Technologies upgraded the Port to the current Windows version of Sage 300. Training was done right this time through a combination of on-site visits and remote sessions. This gave the employees using the system the confidence to work in Sage 300.

Tracking Taxes

Now that the system was in place and people trained, the Port needed to refine many of their processes so everything was housed in and accessible from Sage 300. Turning again to Equation Technologies for help, the first project to tackle was tracking the wide assortment of taxes the Port collected. "We worked with Equation Technologies to first identify all the various taxes we work with," said Liz. "Next we coded all the taxes and now can apply the sales and use taxes correctly. This process helped us to document how we determine what taxes need to be paid and to which authority. In the past, taxes were difficult to calculate

and the process took hours of manual work. Now, we just run a report, everything is calculated correctly and much more quickly.”

Streamline Dockage Fees

Compiling dockage fees and billing was another area that needed some attention. Everything from the length of the ship to tariffs for commodities on board to fees for how many people it takes to tie up the vessel has to be taken into account in order for the correct dockage fee to be billed. Additionally the Port needed to track a variety of information about each vessel that came to dock. “We had been using a 20-year old spreadsheet to track all these variables and only one person knew how to maintain and use the spreadsheet,” said Liz. “The data was then manually transferred into Sage 300 to create a bill. Equation Technologies modified the Sage 300 AR screen by adding unique tabs and fields for us to account for all of the variables and print out a detailed bill for our customers. Our customers are much happier as their bills are more accurate and provide a greater amount of information.” Bills also are created quicker and in customer’s hands faster.

Equation Technologies also documented the billing process for the Port and provided detailed instructions so everyone could use the system. Every port is different in how they need to account for these variables. Using additional fields in Sage 300, the Port now works with two, easy-to-use screens to create their bills. “We are worlds away from where we were,” said Liz.

Easier Processing

Payroll reporting had been cumbersome for the Port because they process payroll in-house. “Equation Technologies has customized various payroll reports for us to fit the state’s exact specifications,” said Liz. “We also save additional time by sending the information electronically whenever we can.” These reports include workers compensation and retirement reports.

The Port has more than 200 recurring monthly invoices for their moorage and lease customers. Coupled with the standard fees that are billed, there is a variable monthly charge for electricity used while docked. Previously, the Port had to open up each invoice and add the line item. Equation Technologies created an

import from a spreadsheet into Sage 300 for the electricity charge to be added to the bill. The Port saves a lot of time each month by having to only enter the information in one place.

Dredging and selling sand is another revenue stream the Port manages. In addition to tracking the amount of sand sold in order to pay the state a royalty, customers receive various prices based on annual consumption. “This used to be a nightmare for us to track and take a lot of time,” said Liz. “Equation Technologies customized the price levels for us so they can be updated monthly and reset annually. They also created a custom invoice format for us that itemizes out everything and correctly charges the customer.”

To take care of the customers who want to pay fees by cash or check the Port could have invested in a Point of Sale system. Seeing that there was not a high volume of transactions, Equation Technologies was able to create a Point of Sale screen that integrates with the accounts receivable module. Equation has also integrated customer records and balances from Sage 300 to our Marina Office reservation software.

Value of Equation Technologies

“We could not have imagined there was a company for us to work with that is the caliber of Equation Technologies,” said Liz. “They have a tremendous ability to work with people and a great combination of technical and accounting skills. Nothing in our system looks customized. It is all centralized as part of Sage 300 and everything is integrated. We feel fortunate to have Equation Technologies as an expert on our team.”

“Equation Technologies has our future in mind so everything is set up to be flexible to accommodate us. I don’t know where we’d be without them.”

Liz Newman
Port Kalama, Executive Assistant



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