# Port of Kalama Cuts Reporting Time by 94% & Focuses on Growth with Equation Technologies

## Customer

**Port of Kalama**

## Industry

Municipal Government

## Challenge

Struggled to gain the detailed financial data on different business lines to make smart, strategic, & informed decisions.

## Solution

Equation Technologies expertise & custom migration tool to move from Sage 300 to Sage Intacct for better reporting, operating efficiencies, & growth.

## Results

- 94% less time spent on financial report generation
- Cut COA from 3000+ to 250
- Minimized audit preparation
- Enhanced project accountability
- Clear insights into cost centers



## Integral Part of the Community

Strategically located between Portland and Seattle on the banks of the mighty Columbia River, you'll find the Port of Kalama. With six miles of prime waterfront, its three deep-water terminals, including two grain elevators, attract commercial shipping traffic from around the globe. But there's more to the Port of Kalama. It also operates a marina, amphitheater, and parks, and leases a variety of industrial and commercial space. It's a winning combination that makes the Port a key source of family wage jobs for the area.

While the Port is considered a local government, it is a completely self-supporting entity with a diverse operating model — a model that complicates its accounting procedures. To simplify those procedures and provide deeper insight into its operations, the Port of Kalama chose to migrate from Sage 300 to Sage Intacct, with assistance from its trusted solution provider, Equation Technologies.

"Our mission is to ensure the Port is an economic driver for our community and is continually developing, growing, and reinvesting in the community," explains Mindy Heuer, Director of Finance and Accounting for the Port of Kalama. "In order to do that well, we needed better reporting tools to help us look at our operations at a more granular level."

## Unlocking Decision-Making Data

The Port had been using Sage 300 for over a decade. "Our biggest frustration with Sage 300 was its reporting capabilities," Mindy explains. We have multiple lines of business, and to accommodate them from an accounting standpoint, we had to maintain a separate series of GL accounts to distinguish between them. As a result, we were always challenged to get the kind of granular data about each business line that management needed to make decisions. We could get the big picture, but not the detail into what made up the picture."

Knowing that other similar companies must have experienced some of the same challenges, Mindy reached out to colleagues in other governmental

agencies to see what accounting applications they used. "We heard Sage Intacct mentioned several times," she says. "It has a solid reputation in this space."

Mindy also consulted with the company's long time Sage business partner, Equation Technologies, who also recommended the Port make the switch to Sage Intacct. "They'd upgraded many other companies from Sage 300 to Sage Intacct, and were confident in the process and in the benefits we'd realize from the move."

To simplify the Sage Intacct rollout and help automate the migration, the Port utilized Equation Technologies' custom data migration utility tool to streamline the data migration of historical transactions from Sage 300 to Sage Intacct. This helped to ensure data integrity and a smoother migration process.

## Dimensions Simplify Complexity

One of the immediate benefits the Port of Kalama discovered following the move was a drastically simplified, streamlined chart of accounts. Using Equation Technologies' expertise and experience with Sage Intacct, they were able to reduce their chart of accounts drastically by helping the Port focus on reporting needs. For example, with their new Sage Intacct system, the Port's locations and capital projects could be moved from a specific GL account to dimensions in conjunction with new tracking mechanisms, like revenue streams.

"Equation helped us move from a chart of accounts numbering over 3,000 to one that numbers just under 250," says Mindy. "They were invaluable in the transition. Now, it is so much easier to wrap your brain around, and so much more straightforward for our accounting team and our stakeholders to make sense of."

Dimensions are the tool that allow for the simplification. While most financial applications use a hard-coded account structure, Sage Intacct keeps it simple. Rather than data points such as location, department, and the project represented by an account segment, the Port stores the information in a dimension field. "It's more intuitive and it makes data entry much quicker since we don't have to pick through thousands of accounts," Mindy explains. "Instead, we have a set of primary accounts and use dimensions to hold the specifics. As our business grows and changes, there's no need to add additional segment combinations."

Before, any error detected during the monthly close would require a painstaking series of reversing and correcting entries. "Now, it's just a matter of correcting the dimension field," Mindy adds.

## Placing Data in the Hands of Those Who Need It

Previously, it was so time consuming to produce granular reports on each business line that the finance team was only able to prepare them once a quarter. In between reports, Mindy and her staff would field questions about budgets, expenses, and revenues from project managers and directors. With training from the team at Equation Technologies, the Port team can now build and edit their own dashboards as needed.

"We are creating dashboards for each user that contain the KPIs and report they care about," Mindy explains. "They can look at that data any time and it's always current. And they can drill down on any number to see what makes up a total." The monthly cashflow analysis, for example, now provides the detailed information that helps each business line manager understand their unit's contributions.

Previously, the Port had to recreate a long list of financial reports in Excel because it wasn't able to report on the data by business line. Now the data is available on demand throughout the month. For example, the experts at Equation Technologies developed automated extraction of warrants information for treasurer reporting, and the Port can now easily obtain consolidated financial statements across all business lines, as well as focused reports for each unique business line.
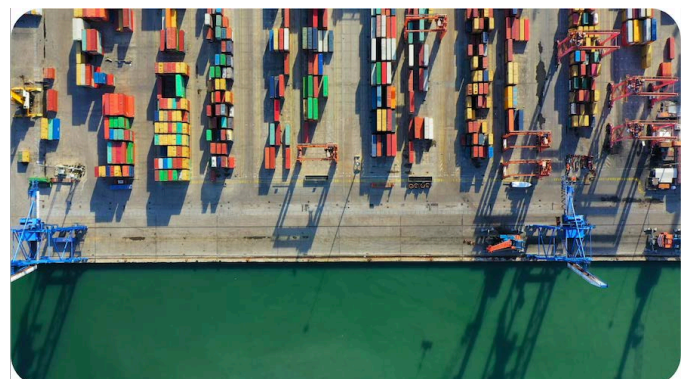
## Improved Project Tracking

As the Port expands and maintains its facilities, it's vital to track the capital and public works projects to ensure the projects remain on track and on budget.

*"Equation helped us move from a chart of accounts numbering over 3,000 to one that numbers just under 250."*

*Mindy Heuer*
*Port of Kalama, Director of Finance & Accounting*

The organization uses Sage Intacct Projects to track time, expenses, and both financial and non-financial data surrounding each of those projects. "We didn't have a dedicated project management system before and are impressed with how valuable it's become to our staff," notes Mindy. "Having one spot where we can go and uncover everything about a project means that we're better able to stay on top of it and complete it within the contract terms."

Additionally, Equation Technologies helped redesign and automate the cumbersome recurring rental and dockage invoice process. The Port gained a much more efficient accounts receivable process, improved business operations by reducing days sales outstanding, and streamlined billing and collections all within one online platform – Sage Intacct.

## Financial Reporting Time Cut By 94%

Access to real-time data allows the managers and directors to affect changes if needed —before it's too late to take action.

"Before we were looking in the rearview mirror," she says. "It was all about what happened. Now it's about what's happening — and the data arrives in time to actually do something about it. I used to spend two days compiling monthly financial statements, now it takes me all of 45 minutes.

With the time saved, Mindy is diving headlong into creating new reports and dashboards that allow the organization to look at data in whole new ways. "For example, we've begun using non-financial accounts to store key pieces of data such as employee count and tonnage the passes through the port," she explains. "The goal is to be able to produce reports that communicate the Port's activities — not only to our internal stakeholders, but ultimately to the public. We're proud of what we do here, and we want to be able to share that information with the community."

## Impressing the Auditors

The Port of Kalama recently completed its first audit since the conversion. "Our auditors took a close look at the new system and were impressed by the audit trail, separation of duties, and by our newly condensed chart of accounts," Mindy says. "Our staff could access all the backup documentation requested for transactions within Sage Intacct. In prior audits I would need to search through paper files for that information. This alone saved hours of my time and relieves a lot of stress."

The organization also leverages Sage Intacct's ability to integrate with third-party applications and developed a custom integration for wharf age and dockage information that automatically and seamlessly syncs with Sage Intacct. Furthermore, to optimize the Port's electronic records management system, Equation Technologies designed an import that brings in payroll data from ADP, and developed links to a content management application.

## Vibrant Future in the Making

"One of my favorite things about Sage Intacct is that I feel we are able to understand the business better now. We can identify trends and spot opportunities now that could have easily been missed before," she says. "Plus, we've created dashboards and reports that give others in the business access to the same insights."

The Port of Kalama is a vibrant, happening spot — a rare combination of industry, recreation, and commerce. Plans are underway for a new public market — hosting local artisans, food, retail shops, restaurants, and additional public space available for rent. With its next-generation financial management solution and a trusted business partner in Equation Technologies, the Port is ready to confidently take on new economic development opportunities like this and continue to grow the Port's value to its community.

*"I used to spend two days compiling monthly financial statements, now it takes me all of 45 minutes."*

*Mindy Heuer*
*Port of Kalama, Director of Finance & Accounting*