Success Story

Sage Intacct fuels new economic development

Port of Kalama cuts monthly financial reporting time by 94% and frees resources to support growth



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

Mindy Heuer
Director of Finance and Accounting, Port of Kalama

The Challenge
The Port of Kalama struggled to gain the detailed financial data pertaining to its many business lines it needs to make smart, strategic, and informed decisions.

The Solution
The organization elected to migrate from Sage 300 to Sage Intacct to provide the reporting flexibility, operating efficiencies, and project management capabilities that better support its growth.

The Outcomes
The Port of Kalama is leveraging the efficiencies gained with Sage Intacct to help fuel further its growth and economic development efforts.

- Reduced time spent on financial report generation by 94%.
- Chart of accounts cut from 3000+ to 250.
- Dimension accounting provides clear insight into individual cost centers.
- Minimized audit preparation time.
- Efficient project management tools bring enhanced project accountability.

Sage

Company
Port of Kalama

Location
Washington State, US

Industry
Government & Public Administration

Sage Products
Sage Intacct

Port of KALAMA

About Port of Kalama
The Port of Kalama sits on the Columbia River in Southwest Washington, immediately off of Interstate 5—situated in the heart of the Pacific Northwest. At the core of the Port of Kalama's mission is a promise to carefully evaluate community investments to create jobs and enhance public recreational opportunities all while protecting and enhancing the environment and natural resources.



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.

"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 Sage business partner, 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."



The Port of Kalama is a vital part of the local community, providing economic development opportunities that promote and sustain the region's growth. Sage Intacct provides the Port with deep insights and efficiencies used to power that growth.

Dimensions simplify complexity

One of the immediate benefits the Port of Kalama discovered following the move was a drastically simplified, streamlined chart of accounts. "We went from a chart of accounts numbering over 3,000 to one that numbers just under 250," says Mindy. "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.

"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. It's now possible for the Port to 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. 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."



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Mindy Heuer
Director of Finance and Accounting, Port of Kalama

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.”



The Port of Kalama's finance team uses the time saved compiling financial reports to better analyze the data in those reports, identifying trends and opportunities for growth and improvement.

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 leverages Sage Intacct's ability to integrate with third-party applications, bringing in payroll data from its outsourced provider, and linking to content management application for electronic records management.

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, 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.



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