

Success Story

3PL provider cuts month end workload by 30%

Gulf Winds International leverages efficiencies in Sage Intacct to save time and power faster decisions

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Crystal McCaughey

Senior Accountant, Gulf Winds International



The Challenge

A long-time user of Sage 100, the company struggled to support its work-from-home workforce. The VPN was slow and unreliable and processes relied heavily on paper.



The Solution

Gulf Winds International evaluated other cloud-based financial management solutions but selected Sage Intacct as the solution best able to meet its needs — at the very best price.



The Outcomes

Sage Intacct empowers the company's team as they work from anywhere, and integrates with third-party applications that extend the solution's value.

- Saving three days each month on AP tasks.
- Saving another three-days on financial reporting.
- Real-time integration with third-party apps provide management with current, actionable data.
- Sage Intacct provides greater data accuracy to improve strategic growth planning.

Sage

Company

Gulf Winds International, Inc.

Location

Texas, US

Industry

Logistics & Transportation

Sage Products

Sage Intacct



About Gulf Winds International

Gulf Winds International, Inc. is a second-generation family-owned business founded in 1996. With a mission to provide world-class logistics services through continual investment in people, clients, community, and the world, Gulf Winds continues to have a clear direction and a broad horizon. The company generously supports local and global charitable through its Hope Legacy Collective foundation.



Critical supply chain link

Port Houston is one of the largest and busiest ports on the Gulf Coast of Texas. In a typical month, nearly 300,000 containers pass through here. There to meet the ships and help keep the nation's supply chain moving is third-party logistics provider (3PL) Gulf Winds International. With 440 trucks and three warehouses across the region, Gulf Winds International has the resources to move its customers' freight where it needs to go. The company takes its role in the nation's supply chain seriously, continually investing in its equipment, people, and technology that allow it to grow and succeed — and Sage Intacct is an essential part of that equation.

Streamline, simplify, and go paperless

When the pandemic struck in 2020, Gulf Winds' employees, like those everywhere, began working from home. That's when the company's technology challenges became technology problems. Remote access to the company's in-house server hosting its Sage 100 application was through a VPN, but the connection speed and interface were slow and cumbersome. "Our IT staff was continually working to keep it operational," recalls Emily Hempler, senior accountant for Gulf Winds International. "It just wasn't as simple and streamlined as we needed to support remote work."

Crystal McCaughey, also a Senior Accountant with the company, adds, "Since we couldn't go into the office, we started to outsource our accounts payable processing. Unfortunately, there was no integration between the provider and Sage 100, so it ended up making more work for us."

With support from everyone up through the company's president, Gulf Wind International's finance team began looking for a cloud-based financial management solution to replace Sage 100. "Everyone felt this was the right move and the right time," explains Crystal. "The company was planning to make remote work permanent for our department, and we'd long been looking for ways to streamline, simplify, and get rid of paper-based processes."

Secure cloud access was a priority, as was the new system's ability to integrate with other applications the company was using. "We had recently abandoned the other accounts payable processing option since it wasn't much help and had instead implemented another AP automation solution that offers integration with Sage Intacct," explains Emily. In addition, the company uses an internal application to track contract drivers' pay and wanted a solution that would easily allow staff to import the data.



Each of Gulf Wind International's senior accountants save more than three days of busywork each month and use that time to identify trends and opportunities.

Most functionality at the most competitive price

Gulf Winds International's finance team did consider other applications before deciding on Sage Intacct. "As a team, though, we decided that Sage Intacct offers the most functionality at the most competitive price — and it was super user friendly," says Crystal. "In addition, we love our Sage partner and wanted to maintain that long-term relationship."

The company's Sage business partner helped launch the data migration from Sage 100 and supported the finance team throughout. "They configured templates for us to map the data from Sage 100 into Intacct, and the transition went smoothly," says Emily.

Anywhere, anytime answers

A paperless initiative is a worthy cause at any time, but when employees work remotely, it becomes imperative. Both Crystal and Emily say the company makes extensive use of the ability to attach supporting documents to any record within Sage Intacct. "It eliminates the need to refer to a paper invoice or handwritten notes, an email, or someone's memory," says Emily. "And it allows anyone who has access to the system to access that support documentation."

The company's CFO appreciates how easily they can access and approve transactions using Sage Intacct, even on the go. "Here again, we use attachments to include supporting notes about transactions so we can preserve the context surrounding the entries that hit the books," explains Emily. "It's not only convenient, but also audit-friendly, and we think of it as smart succession planning. As a result, the company's leaders will always have easy access to important information."

AP automation saves three days each month

Crystal, who focuses much of her attention on payables, says the move to Sage Intacct has transformed how she does her job. "We've gone from tedious manual data entry to no data entry at all. Incoming invoices now enter the system electronically, are automatically routed for approval, and when approved, the transactions are created in Sage Intacct. Then, once we're ready to pay, the AP automation software takes it from there, issuing ACH payments to our vendors. It's saved us at least three days every month."

Saving 15% of work time every month is significant, but Crystal says it's what she can do with the additional time that is particularly impactful. "I'm able to spend more time reviewing purchases, ensuring everything is coded correctly, and identifying overall trends and opportunities."

Streamlined financial reporting saves another three days

Meanwhile, Emily, who handles general ledger and payroll tasks, says she loves everything about Sage Intacct. "For example, everything is fluid and intuitive. Previously we had to print every journal and get it approved before we posted it. Now nothing gets printed — journals are routed for approval, and when they're approved, they are live. I'd estimate I also save three or more days of busywork every month."



“Rather than just being reactionary, I’m spending time looking for anomalies or trends that could positively — or negatively — impact our business.”

Emily Hempler

Senior Accountant, Gulf Winds International

With the time Emily saves, she can analyze the where, why, and how behind the transactions. “Rather than just being reactionary, I’m spending time looking for anomalies or trends that could positively — or negatively — impact our business. Also, we can deliver stakeholders in the company real-time purchasing data, where previously we only had updated data after month-end processing.”

Crystal and Emily cite the example of truck repairs and maintenance costs. Previously these costs might take weeks to make it into the accounting application. Now, the committed costs are available instantly, and budget reports reflect actual, current values. With quicker access to potentially critical data, Gulf Winds International’s management is better prepared to make informed, strategic decisions.

Commitment to the community

Gulf Winds International has a corporate commitment to charitable giving, donating millions of dollars annually to worthy organizations in the community. The commitment to lifting up and making a positive difference is also how it runs its commercial operation. By investing in the tools and technology that allow employees to flourish in their roles, Gulf Winds International is building a lasting legacy.



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