

Success Story

Blue River PetCare doubles accounting efficiency and saves 75 hours amid triple-digit annual growth

Blue River PetCare

“Sage Intacct allows us to innovate and scale with growth. It can seem daunting to be acquiring 20 to 30 clinics a year, but the technology lets us embrace that goal. We have a lot more time to focus on growth, special projects, and new initiatives to help the company move forward.”

Tiffany Hanken

Accounting Manager, Blue River PetCare



Company overview

Operating over 145 veterinary clinics across 31 states, Blue River PetCare is a nationwide network of high-quality animal hospitals, focused on providing exceptional patient care and collaborative operational support from an experienced team of industry professionals.

Results with Sage Intacct

- Increased overall accounting efficiency 2x.
- Eliminated 75 hours of manual work each month.
- Cut monthly close time 42%, to just seven days.
- Scaling with triple-digit annual revenue growth via acquisitions.

Sage

Company

Blue River PetCare

Location

Illinois, US

Industry

Health & Social Care

Sage Products

Sage Intacct





Veterinary network grows and scales with Sage Intacct upgrade

Founded in 2009, Blue River PetCare has grown tremendously as a nationwide network of veterinary hospitals focused on high-quality healthcare for pets and outstanding service to pet owners. With an aggressive acquisition strategy, the Chicago-based company has expanded from 20 clinics in 2014 to over 145 today, across 31 states. Revenue soared nearly 12-fold in the same time, while the workforce has grown to roughly 2,500.

As Blue River grew, its accounting and finance team hit the limits of QuickBooks. Multi-entity consolidations and intercompany settlements grew increasingly difficult and complex, forcing extensive manual work in Excel. Paper copies of invoices, checks, and other documentation filled filing cabinets. Slow and cumbersome reporting in Excel wasn't delivering the timely business insights that Blue River needed. "We knew we'd have to hire a lot more accounting staff if we stayed on QuickBooks, and still we'd be wasting time on inefficient manual processes," said Controller Amy Ward, who joined Blue River in 2014.

Blue River found its ideal solution with Sage Intacct. After evaluating Microsoft Dynamics GP, Blue River selected Sage Intacct for its cloud-based model, rich dimensional general ledger and reporting, and strong multi-entity capabilities. "We felt that Sage Intacct was a more future-oriented solution that could scale with us as we grew," Amy said. The results have been remarkable: Since going live in 2015, Blue River has eliminated roughly 75 hours a month in manual work even amid triple-digit annual growth while delivering new business insights for data-driven decisions.



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Close time cut 42% while speeding intercompany accounting

Overall, Amy estimates that Blue River has doubled its accounting efficiency with its move to Sage Intacct. The company has seen significant time savings in journal entries by using Sage Intacct templates to help automate the process, after initially doing that work manually in Sage Intacct. Another large efficiency gain has been realized in accounts payable with capabilities to upload bills covering multiple clinics and items, eliminating previous manual data entry. “We do anywhere from 250 to 750 checks a week, so we probably would have had to double our AP staff as we grew if we had kept doing it the old way,” Amy said.

Between both journal entries and AP, Blue River has racked up about 50 hours a month in time savings across what is today an 18-person accounting and finance team. And with automation, Blue River shifted from quarterly to monthly intercompany settlements, saving up to seven hours while improving data accuracy. “Intercompany used to be very manual, but if everything goes smoothly it’s a 30-minute process from start to finish,” said Tiffany Hanken, Accounting Manager at Blue River PetCare. “Before it could easily take more than a half-day at the end of the quarter if you had to dig into data to find an error that happened three months ago,” noted Tiffany.

Another savings of about 20 hours a month has been achieved in biweekly payroll journal entries, uploaded into Sage Intacct from PayCom, their HRIS system. Those efficiency improvements helped Blue River reduce its monthly close time from up to 12 days down to seven, a 42% reduction also supported by a close management application from FloQast, a Sage Intacct partner. “Sage Intacct and FloQast work really well together,” Amy said. “Given our multi-entity setup and fast pace of acquisition, they allow us to scale relatively smoothly without adding too much headcount,” Amy said.



New time to focus on innovations and reporting insights

Time savings have empowered Blue River's finance team to contribute more value to the business through innovations. For example, the team has deployed Solver, its first-ever financial planning and analysis solution, and Lease Query for lease accounting to help comply with FASB 842 requirements. "We have a lot more time to focus on growth, special projects, and new initiatives to help the company move forward," Tiffany said. At the same time, the team is generating deeper business insights with Sage Intacct reporting than were possible in the days of QuickBooks and Excel.

"Sage Intacct reporting is very easy, and the dimensions have helped us build things the way we want to see them," Amy said. "If someone wants to view something differently, it's easy to customize a report however the person wants to see it," Amy said. In one innovation, Blue River added cost metrics as a percentage of revenue and EBITDA to reports supplied to clinic managers. That's been especially valuable in managing payroll expenses and vendor spend at the clinic level. "We try to be super user-friendly and not dictate how to operate their business, so providing metrics provides a basis to optimize costs and make more real-time decisions at the clinic level," Amy said.

Sage Intacct also helped Blue River adapt when COVID-19 struck in March 2020, with timely data helping guide decisions on curtailed services and reduced staffing hours. After initial scrambles, Blue River adopted curbside services and saw business return with a spike in "pandemic puppies" among homebound employees, ultimately doubling EBITDA between March 2020 and 2021. "Sage Intacct definitely allows our business to grow without hiring a ton of people," Tiffany said. "It also empowers our young team to really think outside the box on how to use the technology and improve processes and culture from the ground up," said Tiffany.



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