

Customer Success Story



FOOD LIFELINE

HUNGER DOESN'T HAVE TO HAPPEN

Food Lifeline, a Seattle-based community food bank, fills the shelves of 275 local food pantries and provides 90,000 meals a day to western Washington state food assistance programs.

Industry: Non-Profit

Location: Seattle, WA

Employees: 75

Volunteers: 10,000 annually

GL System: Microsoft Dynamics
NAV (Navision)

New Long-Term Forecasting and Scenario Planning Capabilities Guide Food Lifeline's Expected Growth

ABOUT

Seattle-based community food bank Food Lifeline fills the shelves of 275 local food banks and meal programs and provides 90,000 meals daily to western Washington state food assistance programs. Working with the food industry to distribute surpluses to stop hunger, Food Lifeline redirects good food from manufacturers, farmers, grocery stores and restaurants that might otherwise go to waste and gets it to those in need.

As a member of the Feeding America network, Food Lifeline manages a 10,000-member volunteer workforce and a fleet of procurement vehicles, and strives to be excellent stewards of donated food, funds and volunteer time.

CHALLENGE

After rescuing 40 million pounds of food from going to waste in a single year, Food Lifeline shifted their mission from not only providing food for the hungry, but to ending hunger itself. With this new vision, they began expanding their services with the expectation of doubling their distribution over the next several years.

CFO Henry Altschuler knew that Food Lifeline needed the right tools to manage growth in a sustainable and effective way over a multi-year planning horizon. Transforming their Excel-based budgeting and planning process into a 10-year strategic plan would ensure goals were met and prevent Food Lifeline from overreaching their capacity.

The budget solution Food Lifeline needed had to allow them to analyze the volume of food, funding needs and variable expenses, such as personnel and other operating costs, as well as capital expenditure costs as the organization grew. If an anticipated fundraising resource didn't materialize, Altschuler and his team had to be able to quickly understand the impact on each year. Those same what-if capabilities would be called into action if existing programs needed to be expanded or ended.

SOLUTION

Having worked with Hyperion and Adaptive Insights software at other organizations, Altschuler considered both as he evaluated Food Lifeline's needs. He also tapped into his network of fellow Feeding America members to learn which budgeting and planning software they used and could recommend.

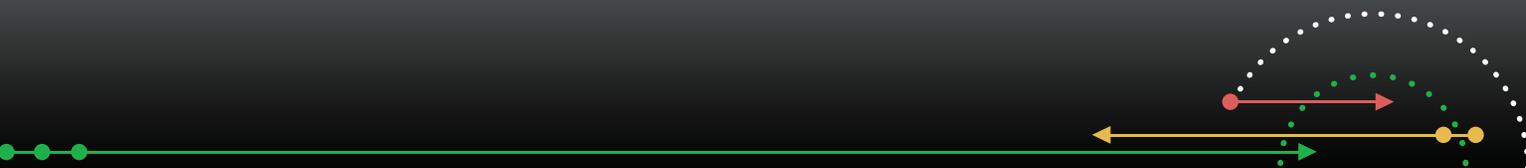
"It's very flexible and easy to adjust the components of our plan. ...all without worrying about formulas and broken links in Excel."

HENRY ALTSCHULER

CFO
Food Lifeline

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They encouraged him to evaluate the budgeting and forecasting solution Budget Maestro from Centage Corporation. Budget Maestro easily met Food Lifeline's needs for dynamic planning, expense management and headcount cost-drivers while providing an intuitive interface that would speed implementation and adoption of the tool.

Budget Maestro's integration with their ERP system, Microsoft Dynamic's NAV software (Navision), reduced the finance team's workload while eliminating manual errors. The seamless integration of Budget Maestro with ADP personnel and benefit data is flexible enough to support Food Lifeline as they rapidly scale up their operations. With 45% to 60% of the budget directly tied to headcount, the doubling of staff from 75 to 150 made it critical to have personnel-associated costs budgeted properly.

In addition, Food Lifeline purchased land and buildings for the first time in their history. They selected the depreciation methods for the capital expenditures in Budget Maestro and it automatically created the schedules and appropriate transaction records that would impact the financial statements of subsequent months and years.

BENEFITS

The transition from planning for a single year in Excel spreadsheets to working with Budget Maestro on the 10-year forecast is now complete and has cut the annual budgeting cycle in half.

Food Lifeline now perpetually has the next fiscal year budgeted and operating managers only need to provide small changes, saving them time each month. Altschuler remarked how budgets get stale and what a difference Budget Maestro has made to Food Lifeline, "How we look at our performance, [Budget Maestro] has been really critical, especially with our expanded time horizon."

Evaluating proposed programs through scenario planning is now second nature and means simply copying the approved budget plan within Budget Maestro and tweaking it to see the impact of distinct variables, including adjusting program start dates or phasing in implementations of specific programs.

HR planning in Budget Maestro integrates headcount numbers with anticipated growth to produce KPIs for managing programs within the budgeting plan. Working within Budget Maestro, Altschuler asserts, "If we need to hire a truck driver sooner, we can reflect that right away. If we hold off on hiring a position, we can change the start dates very easily. It's very flexible and easy to adjust the components of our plan... all without worrying about formulas and broken links in Excel."

Food Lifeline tries to keep benefits packages as competitive as possible with other local Fortune 100 companies in order to attract employees with the desired skill sets. Benefit package adjustments, such as projecting an additional 1% match to their employees' retirement plan contributions and seeing its effect within Budget Maestro is an easy task. Altschuler explained, "Being able to put in that factor and already have the growth rates there for salary and wage increases simplifies the whole planning process so that we can quickly ask 'What-if...?'. We can spend more time evaluating results as opposed to spending it trying to collect data."

Food Lifeline expects to source and distribute a staggering 500 to 700 million pounds of food over the 10-year horizon. It was essential that they streamline their budgeting process while increasing its accuracy and functionality to meet their growth objectives – Centage's Budget Maestro met their needs and more.



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