

Graduating from a Legacy Platform to Collaborative Planning in the Cloud

Industry:

- Higher Education

Brown University Overview:

- Private, highly selective research university
- \$900 million budget
- 5,000 faculty and staff members, 8,000 students
- Students come from all 50 states and more than 100 countries

About Brown University

Brown University is an independent Ivy League institution dedicated to discovering, communicating and preserving knowledge. Located in historic Providence Rhode Island and founded in 1764, Brown is the seventh-oldest college in the United States. Brown offers undergraduate, graduate and medical programs in more than 50 majors. The university also includes its Alpert Medical School, School of Public Health and School of Engineering. With an operating budget of \$900 million, the University's vibrant, diverse community consists of more than 8,000 students from across the United States and 100 different countries and 5,000 faculty and staff members.



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- Susan Howitt, Associate Vice President for Budget and Planning, Brown University

Challenge: Detailed Budget and Line Item Planning using a Workday Data Model

From 2011 to 2013, Brown University implemented Workday Human Capital Management and Financials. As part of that change they completely revamped their financial data model (chart of accounts). Brown quickly realized that their legacy budget planning and development system would not easily integrate with Workday, and they would be faced with a costly and time consuming project to get the two platforms to work together. “We realized the current solution wouldn’t work well with Workday,” recalls Susan Howitt, associate vice president for budget and planning at Brown. “It was older technology and not easily adaptable to the new state-of-the-art data model we implemented.” Roberta ‘Bert’ Gordon, former Workday Project Director for Brown, felt the same: “Tidemark’s knowledge of Workday is making this a quicker and easier implementation. They speak the same language. And Tidemark made it their job to understand how to integrate these platforms to meet our needs.” For Howitt, the decision to replace the legacy system with Tidemark boiled down to a single essential question: “Why would you stick with technology that’s 10 to 15 years old when you’re moving to the cloud?” Brown deployed Tidemark for FY15 budget development and planning in April 2014.

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While Brown’s legacy system allowed the finance group to monitor spend and revenue, developing a consolidated plan was arduous. “There was no workflow and virtually no control, and no one had a reliable single view of where they stood against the big picture,” recalls Gordon. “We spent a lot of time overcoming the limitations of our legacy platform so we could focus on the metrics that were important to us.”

Solution: Tidemark

In April 2014, Brown went live with a budget planning process in Tidemark using the Workday data model. More than 120 users throughout the University are using Tidemark apps as part of the new-year budget planning. Financial managers can “slice and dice” the data to see the detailed budgets and high-level summaries to determine if the budget is an accurate reflection of their plans. “Tidemark gives us the functionality, and flexibility to budget in the Workday data model and see the results at all levels of the organization,” says Howitt.

Challenge: Creating a Unified Planning Process

With four schools working from separate financial models and data repositories, Brown was struggling to maintain a unified strategic planning process that provided visibility across the entire University. Finance managers worked overtime to make sure each school's spreadsheets synced with University-wide assumptions and that long-term plans aligned with the University's overarching strategic plan. In this environment, stakeholders didn't have a way to track the impact of their decisions, let alone take strategic action with confidence. "It was disconnected, and it wasn't easy to integrate," recalls Gordon. "Each unit used their own format for multi-year planning, so there had to be a highly manual process to generate a comprehensive view."

Solution: Making More Strategic Decisions

Tidemark's real-time aggregation of data eliminates time-intensive, manual processes. Brown can seamlessly aggregate data from multiple users into one unified planning process and operating budget, effectively replacing several legacy solutions. With Tidemark, Brown now will have a single view of plans and analytics that can be shared across the University. Decision makers will be able to collaborate within the same view of data, and all information is presented in the same format, so they will get a full view of the data and the events, collaboration, and conversations taking place around it.

Tidemark apps give users a full view of key internal and external factors driving organizational performance. Brown's focus is now shifting to a more proactive and strategic forecasting process. With the ability to adjust drivers in sync, major operating units of the University can actively participate in the planning process and make better, more strategic decisions. And, since all information is shown in the context of overarching operations, it can be connected to specific driver-based changes to better inform future decisions. "Our new approach is much more driver-based than before," says Gordon. "With Tidemark, you make changes as you go, and with this iterative process, you can easily see the impact of data, roles and other variables no matter where in the process you are."