Brushy Creek Successfully Integrates Utility Billing and Accounting

CUSTOMER
Brushy Creek Municipal Utility District

INDUSTRY
Public Utility

LOCATION
Round Rock, TX

OTHER INFO
5,000 Customers

13 Deed Restricted HOAs

SYSTEM
UMS.Net Utility Billing Software

Sage MIP Fund Accounting

Sage Authorized Partner

"We couldn't trust the data," explains Mike Petter, Controller for Brushy Creek Municipal Utility District located in Round Rock, Texas. An obsolete utility billing system and isolated data trapped in spreadsheets meant that the 5,000-customer district faced a continuous stream of problems, risks and inefficiencies.

"The database in our old billing system crashed just about every time we billed," Petter explains. "Besides that, it wasn't integrated with our financial accounting software so our staff spent countless hours manually transferring data from one system to the other. Then they'd go back and spend more time reconciling numbers that didn't balance." Because the billing system lacked security features, the numbers could easily be changed by any staff member which presents obvious financial risk.

"The lack of timely and reliable financial data made day-to-day operations nearly impossible to manage," explains Petter. "It was difficult to set rates, manage taxes, and determine which departments were making and losing money." Calculating cash flow was yet another challenging process performed entirely outside the system in Excel spreadsheets. Petter says, "We couldn't make any kind of financial plan because we didn't know where money was coming from, where it was going, and how much we had available."

Pulling the Plug on the Old System

With Sage MIP Fund Accounting recently implemented and running smoothly, Brushy Creek already had a solid fund accounting application in place. Now it was time for a utility billing system that would integrate with Sage MIP Fund Accounting … and that's exactly what they found in UMS.Net developed by Continental Utility Solutions, Inc. (CUSI) – a Sage Endorse Development Partner.

Built in the Microsoft .Net toolset, UMS.Net is a state-of-the-art utility billing and customer information system designed specifically for public utilities that want to leverage technology and integration with Sage MIP Fund Accounting to lower operating costs and generate new revenue streams.

Getting a Charge Out of UMS.Net

"UMS.net has been fantastic and the integration with Sage MIP Fund Accounting is key," says Petter. All transactions in UMS.Net are automatically transferred to the appropriate General Ledger accounts in Sage MIP Fund Accounting. Mike says, "It was taking us 2 to 3 hours every day to manually transfer, balance, and reconcile data. With UMS.Net, that same process requires nothing more than the push of a button. In fact, the integration alone will pay for the entire system."

"With UMS.Net, we no longer manually transfer data to Sage MIP Fund Accounting which saves 2 to 3 hours every day. The integration alone will pay for the entire system."

"UMS.Net has allowed us to reduce our billing staff which is saving us at least $35,000 a year in salary and benefits."

- Mike Petter
Controller
Brushy Creek

The most telling change? "With the old system, it took an entire day to run a billing cycle. Now it takes an hour to generate 2,700 bills twice per month." Petter adds, "We also reduced our billing staff which is saving at least $35,000 a year in salary and benefits. Plus the one person that's left in that department will probably be spending about a third of her time doing something other than billing because of the time that's been saved."

Accurate, Secure and Reliable

Because of all the effort involved in getting data out of old system, Petter wasn't getting reports until the end of the month. But now he says, "I have real-time information, more accurate receivables, and better cash flow. Plus we're no longer sending customers to collections 3 months after they've moved out of the district. When receivables fall behind, we're on it immediately."

Today, financial information is totally accurate and reliable. The internal controls of Sage MIP Fund Accounting work hand-in-hand with UMS.Net. Mike says, "Internal controls are so much better because the integration has eliminated any processes that could be hindered by human error."

As for system stability, Petter states, "Our old system crashed just about every time we billed and we were on the phone with IT support 2 to 3 times per week. But with UMS.net, our IT manager never even looks at the system because he never has to. It's completely reliable and we've significantly reduced our IT support costs."

Restoring Power to the Customers

The benefits of UMS.net integrated with Sage MIP Fund Accounting extend all the way to the Brushy Creek customers. According to Petter, "Our two primary sources of revenues are property tax and utility services. With our old system, we were flying blind which made it very difficult to set defensible tax and utility rates." Petter adds, "With UMS.Net, we have reliable information about which departments are making money, which are losing money, and can set our rate structure accordingly. In fact, we've lowered the tax rates in our district without any impact on revenue."

Once an unending "stream" of troubles for Brushy Creek, their billing and accounting systems are now a picture of efficiency and cost savings thanks to UMS.Net and Sage MIP Fund Accounting.

Continental Utility Solutions, Inc.
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