

Increasing Business Efficiency – Customized Financial Management Utilizing QuickBooks



INTRODUCTION

Omni Realtors and Property Management, Inc. is a full service family-owned real estate and property management firm that offers industry expertise to support consultation, acquisition, management, and disposition of residential and light commercial real estate investment property. For over twenty-five years Omni has been providing property management services for real estate owners and investors across the nation. Headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee, Omni currently provides services for 343 owners and investors that reside in 33 states as well as Switzerland, Korea, China and England. The properties they manage are located in the Mid South of Tennessee, Mississippi and Arkansas. Since a large percentage of their owners and investors reside out of state, Omni has a great deal of responsibility to provide accurate and timely property management and real estate services.

BUSINESS CHALLENGES IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

With an eye to the future, Omni knows that the property management market has yet to peak. With increasing owners and investors nationwide and only a few property management companies, Omni is on a quest for national expansion. To begin its quest, Omni began reinvesting in innovative eMarketing strategies as well as research and development initiatives.

One such initiative was performing a SWOT analysis to determine what, if any, internal weaknesses would hinder their future growth nationally. Over the last year, they discovered that one great challenge existed, their technology: specifically their CRM (client relationship management) system and financial management system which utilizes QuickBooks. It became apparent to Omni that their version of QuickBooks was no longer meeting their needs, and customization based on their specific industry was desperately needed. The company was spending too much time reconciling their transactions and data mining cryptic information. Furthermore, Omni was not able to accurately track which activities were creating the largest amounts of revenue for the company.

OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE TECHNOLOGY AND INCREASE EFFICIENCIES

After thorough research, an employee recommended Gita Faust, an Advanced Certified QuickBooks ProAdvisor, in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, approximately forty-five minutes north of Philadelphia. Gita is well known in the real estate industry for her QuickBooks technical expertise and accounting proficiency. After an in-depth free consultation, Omni realized that Gita was the perfect fit: she specialized in all facets of the real estate industry, and her business strategy was tailored to fit her client's needs. Gita's pricing strategy was flexible and there was no contract; she bills hourly which creates a more level playing ground to fit each of her client's different business needs. Furthermore, her references were impeccable as were her technological resources to work with Omni virtually. Omni decided to hire Gita to redesign and customize their property management software.

THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Gita decided that the best solution was to integrate parts of QuickBooks into their CRM system so Omni's client and financial data was all housed in one cohesive database. Furthermore, Gita needed to customize the financial system based upon Omni's unique needs revolving around their invoicing process

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and unique closing date. Fortunately, Omni was already using the QuickBooks version Gita suggested, QuickBooks Enterprise. QuickBooks Enterprise is flexible, dynamic as well as user friendly; it is particularly ideal for a mid-sized company with a goal of maximizing profits.

The implementation process consisted of four phases: obtaining, integrating, scrubbing and testing the data. It was an intense three month process but both Gita and Omni were excited to get the project started. The data needed was obtained from various sources including Excel, QuickBooks and their CRM system. Once all of the information required was obtained, both parties had to check it for accuracy. After the data was checked for accuracy, it was integrated and consolidated into one new data file, a labor intensive endeavor that extended well over a month. All of the data was transferred from QuickBooks, CRM, and Excel then assembled into a centralized QuickBooks data file. All the critical client and financial data that was once housed in multiple locations (such as owner building and unit details as well as tenant and lease information), and had no way of communicating with each other for analytical purposes, was manually extracted and essentially dumped into a new database. Once the new consolidated data file was created, it was scrubbed for accuracy. After all of the data was transferred and checked for accuracy, Gita performed extensive testing to make sure all of the functionality she created was indeed functional. Though a standard part of any project, the testing phase is time consuming and labor intensive, and in this instance extended over a few weeks. After all four phases were completed, Gita spent one month training Omni on all of the property management system's new capabilities.

KEY BUSINESS RESULTS

After three intense months, Omni was able to integrate Gita's customized system into their financial management systems. The reporting capabilities and business insight far exceeded their expectations. Omni was now able to put a value on services that once could not be valued, and this could be done with less man power. Instead of hiring additional employees, they were able to automate several functions, such as sending out invoices, rent receipts and tenant notifications. This alone equates to thousands of dollars in annual savings. Furthermore, their reporting capabilities have increased by tenfold: where Omni once was challenged by reconciling their transactions, performing data mining, and tracking revenue generating activities, these tasks are not only possible but simplified to the touch of a button. Furthermore, Omni has realized which marketing activities provide the highest ROI (return on investment) and which activities do not. This allows Omni to more efficiently target their market.

By addressing their technological challenges, specifically with their financial management system, they were not only able to save thousands of dollars in annual expenses, but they are able to analyze which business activities are most profitable or costly and will continue to provide cost savings for years to come. More still, their system's new capabilities allow them to decrease waste as many tasks that were once bound by paper (paper invoices, tenant notices, etc.) are now paperless.

After successfully integrating their financial system, Omni feels they are on their way to achieving their strategic goal of national expansion. In an increasingly competitive environment within a shrinking world with dwindling resources, Omni is thankful to have partnered with Gita Faust and feels they are now able to reposition themselves as a conscious, technology savvy and modern real estate and management firm.