

The background of the quote is a dark, abstract image with swirling red and blue lines, resembling a network or data flow.

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### The Customer

Bunker Hill Community College is the largest community college in Massachusetts. With multiple campuses in the Boston area, BHCC offers day, evening, midnight, and web-based classes to a population of students that has grown at least one hundred percent over the past four years.

At BHCC, the Budget Director, Jeff Ginsberg, is fiscally conservative, but forward-thinking. His past position at the governor’s budget office and an employee of the Senate Ways and Means provided the experience and foresight to harness and structure the steadily growing financial needs of BHCC.

“We have courses in many areas and need to stay ahead of the curve,” says Jeff. BHCC is internationally recognized for the development of individualized and alternative methods of instruction. BHCC has over four hundred full-time employees, and operates a budget of over \$60 million from grants, state money, and tuition and capital budget.

### The Problem

Prior to adopting BudgetPak, BHCC was using Excel spreadsheets for budgeting. When he first arrived, Jeff twisted and tweaked Excel spreadsheets in an effort to make them his own. “It was awful,” he laments. “There was a constant series of annoyances. Using Excel for budgeting was cumbersome, painful and unpleasant.” The budget process asked budget-holders to fill in numbers and provide an explanation in a spreadsheet.

The biggest issue was this: Ninety-nine percent of the time, the users entered the same number as last year with

no explanation of their rationale. And it was impossible to try to manage multiple versions of the spreadsheets. “Excel is not a database,” Jeff agrees. “There was no organization in Excel from year to year. I could not find information when I needed it. There was no thought process involved. People simply entered numbers. There was nothing that got the creative juices flowing as to why they were putting the number in. It was boring. We didn’t want to aspire to boring.”

“Department heads don’t like spreadsheets. Education people are afraid of Excel and do not know what to do with it.”

Bunker Hill has a great—and growing—reputation. In order to keep up with organizational progress and expansion, the Budget Department had to act accordingly.

### The Evaluation

Over the years, Bunker Hill looked into the various alternatives for budgeting software, but none inspired them. Some were too expensive, and others were more than what the college needed. There was the option of using Datatel, which the college uses for its general ledger, but Jeff found it to be too complex, and wanted something straightforward and user friendly. Jeff also wanted a system that minimized IT involvement so that he could operate independently.

Jeff wanted to make sure that people who would use the system also liked it, so he involved his users in the decision process. After seeing the system, the users unanimously voted for BudgetPak. They liked the intuitive nature and the step-by-step processes. They liked that they could make their own changes, quickly produce reports, and they liked how it helped them think about their budget. They liked the *ownership*.

## The Implementation and Support

"I candidly do not remember the implementation so it must have been smooth. I would have remembered otherwise. By the time we went through our first cycle, I had already been using the product for a few months. XLerant handled the first training and I did the rest of the training. XLerant built the entire application and set up the system for us. It was outstanding support."

Integration with the Datatel GL was simple. Jeff says, "People should not worry about integration with their general ledger. BudgetPak works with Banner, Datatel or any other general ledger that a college may use. People always ask how difficult it is to implement and integrate BudgetPak with the general ledger. It was simple."

The need for IT during implementation was minimal. "They installed the product on the server but we did the rest," says Jeff.

## The Results

Now implemented, Bunker Hill has forty users of BudgetPak.

Jeff declares, "My budget process is twice as effective as before implementing BudgetPak. It is twice as easy. This was a tremendously successful purchase for me and for Bunker Hill." He adds, "I don't like to spend money unless it is justified. I was conservative in my purchase of BudgetPak."

Asked about the main benefit of BudgetPak, Jeff replies, "While I purchased this for my users, I also thought that it was going to make my job easier and help me to be more efficient. I got as much benefit out of this as users. BudgetPak saves me time, makes it easier to find things, and I don't have to check for accuracy. Selfishly, I wanted the product to make my life better. [Laughs] Users receive tremendous benefits as well. Now we have much easier reporting, we can see notes on items, and we have a more efficient budget approval process. The whole exercise of budgeting has become thought provoking. The benefit of an easier process has made my users more efficient. It created a more accurate

budget for the college. There was an immediate improvement in our overall communications process. "Budgeting is as much a communication exercise as a financial one. Users don't have to call me up and ask me questions. They are now more self-sufficient. What else could we ask for?"

"BudgetPak helps us determine how we are going to accomplish our goals at Bunker Hill. Plus we can balance user flexibility and financial control. Yes, you don't need to trade off one for the other. You can have the best of both worlds and we loved that. And BudgetPak helps us create a culture of budget accountability. It makes people more accountable." The college optimizes their budget by utilizing salary planning and makes extensive use of ActionPaks. Jeff says, "ActionPaks help department heads organize their initiatives better." He also notes, "In FY11 our actual expenditures came within 0.6% of the budget. That is pretty hard to do and I would say that budgeting with BudgetPak had some impact on the results."

Jeff does not have an IT background. However, the product is simple to maintain for a non-systems professional. "System maintenance takes me about ten minutes per release. There is little to no impact whatsoever on IT. Anyone can do this."

XLerant provided Bunker Hill Community College with personalized support every step of the way. Jeff states that he never had any doubts about XLerant. "We trusted them and respected them and had total confidence in the organization. In the end, that is what helped us make our decision."

Jeff offers this advice to his peers in the education sector: "I would certainly recommend not using Excel or Excel look-alike products for budgeting. That is old school. I speak to colleges all the time and always recommend BudgetPak. My philosophy is K.I.S.S. [Keep It Simple, Stupid], don't get overly complex. Choose value in your selection process. In my opinion, there are far more expensive products out there but they are not as good as BudgetPak. Our ROI is in the time saved, but also in the value of a superior budget. How do you do an ROI on that?"

