



XLERANT

Case Study

Dr. Bob Rood, CFO for Daemen College says:

“You will get exactly what you need and it will be easy to implement.”

The Customer

Located in Amherst, New York, Daemen College is a private, nonsectarian liberal arts school chartered to award both undergraduate and graduate level degrees in fields such as business, healthcare, and education. The mission of Daemen College is to prepare creative, ethically minded leaders for a diverse and interconnected world.

Dr. Bob Rood is relatively new to the college, taking on the roles of vice president for business affairs, treasurer and CFO in spring 2018. Bob says the budget process was a sort of “blend” with regards to who was in control. *“Here the process is a mix of centralized control through the finance office, yet decentralized with respect to the budget holders themselves. Some departments have managers who understand both the academic and business side of things - someone who basically acts as a budget director – and so they ultimately get to decide yes or no for different requests.”*

The Problem: Gaining insight, not just information.

As with many organizations managing budgeting in Excel spreadsheets, the involvement of multiple levels of staff just further complicated an already complex process. Bob explained the challenges were systemic, *“It was everything from the length of time that it took to accumulate the data, the process of verifying of data, the lack of documentation for a lot of what was going on, and so on. It left the finance department wondering: ‘What’s the business process? What are you thinking? Why did this expense go up so much?’”*

The process of sending out a spreadsheet to a department head or budget manager for completion also opened up the opportunity for serious mistakes. *“In my experience, every time we sent out Excel sheets to employees, somebody would add a row, add a column, or they would modify the spreadsheet,”* Bob shared. *“Even though you thought you made it unmodifiable, staff would find a way to circumvent the system. So, it always made bringing stuff back in and accumulating the data a challenge, to say the least!”*

The Evaluation: Purpose-built vs. built-in.

The current accounting software used at Daemen comes with an integrated budgeting program, but Bob felt it wasn’t their best option. *“I’ve dealt with the software that was embedded in our accounting software. The offered budget-planning system is okay. It works. But it doesn’t give you that ease of documentation capability. You lose a lot of good detailing capabilities that you don’t get with a formal budgeting software. That is the kind of detail that both enables informed decision making and gives a historical trail of why those decisions were made.”*

Because Bob had experience with XLERANT’s BudgetPak, a cloud-based budgeting, forecasting, and reporting solution, he did not have to test out any new budgeting software. He knew what he wanted to implement. *“When I came to Daemen, I wasted no time. I said, ‘Let’s get this thing set up and let’s get BudgetPak in here.’ I didn’t have to look elsewhere because I already knew how well it worked. It’s designed specifically for the challenges of engaging lots of staff at different levels of an organization in the budgeting process.”*

He added, *“The various upgrades that have been done over the years have just made BudgetPak even more easy to use. From being able to import stuff from your previous budget to capturing the details or rationale behind each decision. It just makes life so much easier. That’s one of the reasons why I’ve been such a big proponent for BudgetPak project for so long.”*

The Solution: Delivering tracking, transparency, and time.

Bob pursued a rapid implementation schedule. *“I wanted it implemented for our first budget cycle, which led to some concern about timelines. But I knew once we got the system up, budgeting would be quicker and easier. Instead of six months of lead time, we’d be able to do it with two weeks.”* Daemen College is now in its second year of using BudgetPak, and the results are overwhelmingly positive. Bob notes the ease of keeping everything on track with the cloud-based system.

“When you send out an Excel spreadsheet, you don’t know where it goes to, who gets it, what they do with it, etc. Here, you know where everything is in the life cycle. You know who’s been in there



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(and who's been ignoring it!) You can call them up and say, 'I see you haven't been in your budget. Do you need some help? Is there a question? Are you stressed for time?' You can focus on helping to drive that process and make sure that deadlines are met and everybody's comfortable in the system doing what they need to do."

Bob is thrilled with how user-friendly the system is. *"The easier these systems are, the more accessible, and the more user-friendly – the more people will be inclined to use them. And I think that's true not only of the budget software but of our finance package or anything you use. Because of modern technology, we all want to be able to just point and click. BudgetPak gives us that ease-of-use that we all have come to expect."*

Bob also commented on how excellent the XLerant customer service is, *"When I call or put a request in to the XLerant help desk, I get a response very quickly. The folks at XLerant are exceptionally good about getting back to me and fixing problems, finding solutions, and helping me out. So from a service aspect, it's been unquestionably great."*

Lastly, Bob mentioned how quick and efficient the implementation process is with BudgetPak. *"You will get exactly what you need, and it will be easy to implement. It will not require the IT support that other software often demands. And most importantly, you're going to get a really good product that's going to be very serviceable."*

The Results: Making a good budgeting process even better.

Bob shared he couldn't be happier with how much BudgetPak has improved their already successful hybrid, or 'semi-decentralized' process. *"We have about 70 users in the system, and now, any department can run their own comparisons, verify their own numbers, then check to figure out, 'Does this make sense to me?' And certainly, as you roll up from a department to a division to academic affairs...having that level of roll-up facilitates their analysis as well."*

Getting away from Excel also enabled Daemen to further decentralize with headcount planning. Previously managed by the controller, they were able to push out the entire budget with all of the headcount details to the department managers once there were proper level-specific security and tracking controls in place. *"Managers need to be able to see this information," Bob explained, "By convincing people that data's secure, that everyone can't see everything, but only what's relevant for you, it just eases the process so much."* And now senior management can easily run comparison reports at any level to see when salary data was changed (and why) by reading the justification.

Another related improvement with BudgetPak is empowerment and engagement of the Daemen College staff at all levels, which ultimately saves everyone time. *"The more you can get people in there once a month, once a week maybe, to start looking at their data, the more comfortable they're going to be in there doing it. They understand they can't hurt anything. It empowers them to be more inclined to do it themselves. It frees up our time and it expedites their answers to questions."*

Bob says if you make sure you have the right technology to support your efforts, and you assure your team you'll be there step-by-step until they're comfortable, it becomes much easier to decentralize your budgeting process. *"You have to make sure the culture is ready for it and you have the support of whoever is leading the implementation. As long as you can provide people with assurance and let them know you'll walk through this process side-by-side with them, they know if they get stuck, there's someone to call. Plus, you get to know exactly where they're at in the process."*

“And most importantly, you're going to get a really good product that's very serviceable.”



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