



# XLERANT

## Case Study

**Michael Vinarcik, treasurer and CFO of INCOSE says:**

**“We actually completed the budget in record time.”**

### The Customer

Founded in 1990, the International Council on Systems Engineering (INCOSE) is a non-profit professional society that was created to develop and disseminate the transdisciplinary principles and practices that let corporations and organizations realize successful systems. With more than 19,300 members and 65 chapters worldwide, INCOSE has a vision for a better world through a systems approach.

Michael Vinarcik is currently serving as volunteer treasurer and chief financial officer for INCOSE. All leadership roles and most other roles are filled by volunteers, aside from a small paid staff based out of San Diego. *“When I was elected treasurer, I inherited our previous practices. We had successfully transitioned to a value stream approach. There were difficulties involved in trying to compile monthly updates from the budget holders; the annual budget process was also an exercise in laborious reconciliation of disparate sources of information. The existing budget process seemed antiquated to me (in my ‘day job’ I champion single authoritative sources of truth for engineering information). I decided that we had grown enough to warrant a dedicated budgeting solution and that it was time for a change.”*

### The Problem: Growing out of spreadsheets

INCOSE had gotten too large to continue using Excel for budgeting and forecasting management. Approximately 30 to 50 volunteers, often without financial backgrounds, had to generate Excel-based budgets for the treasurer to spend time compiling, correlating, and assembling. Difficulty with version control and corrupted formulas created a very complicated and labor-intensive process. Michael says, *“One of my fundamental principles is to never waste a volunteer’s time. I would rather have them spend an hour furthering our goals through developing impactful products or mentoring students rather than fighting with an Excel sheet, or having me fight with it.”*

As an international organization, it can be difficult keeping everyone on the same page, especially when

new volunteers come in and need to get up to speed quickly and without much training. *“The international footprint, the ability for people worldwide to log in to the same repository, is crucial. As is having the ability to store important historical data for volunteers to easily access. We needed something better than spreadsheets.”*

### The Evaluation: A straightforward approach

Michael ultimately wanted a uniquely tailored solution that streamlined INCOSE’s budgeting process. He says, *“During my research, I was looking for a focused budgeting tool that would give us the insights and the ability to collect information we needed without it being overly burdensome or requiring a large amount of training, or making it very laborious.”* He wanted something economical and capable, where the provided value was worth the expense.

After a variety of web searches, Michael came across XLERant’s BudgetPak, a cloud-based budgeting, forecasting, and reporting solution. *“I did my research, the price point was appropriate and it had the capabilities we need. The interface was straightforward and felt nothing like Excel (although there were tabular views), so I knew it would work for our volunteers. I took my recommendations to the board for approval.”*

### The Solution: Providing support, engagement, and ways to plan for the future.

The implementation process started at the beginning of INCOSE’s budget cycle, and the XLERant team aided in a very smooth transition. Michael says, *“We supplied our past budget worksheets and a variety of other materials, and the client services team did a great job of setting up the system and aligning it to our specific needs. We provided XLERant with guidance on how we do things today and what changes we want in the future, to which they showed us functionality and consulted with us on different options for use. It was a very simple and collaborative process.”*

He also talks highly of the training process and engagement from the volunteer staff. *“We completed and recorded a*



*detailed training on the software, and I personally created simple task-based training videos for things the average budget owner needs to know as well as crafting the actual budget and entering monthly estimates. The volunteers took to it very well just by being exposed to the task-based training and an occasional Zoom call. They were able to engage with the system, sign off on budgets to show they were done and facilitate conversations on their decisions. Now, it's easy to just get them to go in to the system once a month to update their estimates."*

Michael mentioned how helpful the different features of BudgetPak are, especially during the pandemic. *"I utilized more of BudgetPak's functionality as I became more familiar with the product. One of our staff members was interested in exploring BudgetPak to do some what-if reporting, and he was able to figure out most of it on his own and with a little help from me. When COVID-19 impacted us, it was important to have what-if and scenario modeling capabilities to get insights. For example, we have a travel budget and conferences as a major revenue source; when venues were closed and travel was restricted, we worried about the impacts on our members, our membership retention, and our income and expenses. Being able to predict and forecast easily using BudgetPak to show how our finances were impacted by these disruptions was very useful."*

### **The Results:** *Saving time for what really matters.*

The implementation of BudgetPak led to immediate results. *"We actually completed the budget in record time, between the software's ease-of-use and the support we got from the XLerant team. I don't encounter silent failures when someone has changed a spreadsheet formula and it's not apparent that a total or other calculation is incorrect. The fact that we can now trust the numbers is huge and allows us to focus on running the organization, not double-checking arithmetic."*

Michael highlighted the ease-of-use and focus on end users. *"It's important that the user interface and underlying philosophy for the budgeting and reporting processes align with how your users engage with it. It's a huge deal that our staff didn't have to become BudgetPak experts, they just needed some basic training on a few tasks. Plus, XLerant's customer service team is always reachable if anyone has an advanced question."*

*"XLerant feels like a valued partner that is there to make our life better. We can spend less time dealing with the finances and more time executing our core mission."*

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XLerant | 203.883.4380

info@xlerant.com | www.xlerant.com