



Customer Profile:

Earthlink was founded in 1994 with a vision to “change the way the world does business by demonstrating that a company based on integrity and respect for the individual can do an outstanding job of serving its customers, providing meaningful work for its employees, delivering an exceptional return to its owners, and being a force for good in its community.” Today, Earthlink enriches people’s lives by helping them to communicate better. As one of the world’s largest internet service providers, Atlanta-based Earthlink serves almost five million subscribers with an award-winning range of innovative access, web hosting, and e-commerce solutions. In addition to its commitment to its customers, Earthlink employs over six thousand people in over sixteen locations, as well as creates exceptional value for its shareholders as a publicly traded, billion dollar company.

Challenge:

Earthlink wanted financial planning software that would assist in company-wide annual and rolling budgeting, forecasting, financial analysis, reporting, and communication. The vision was to provide a secure, “one-stop” website for managers and finance individuals to submit detailed budgets and forecasts, conduct financial analysis, and produce real-time, customizable reporting. After an exhaustive selection process with over a dozen software vendors, including Adaytum, Cognos, and Hyperion, Earthlink chose the Microsoft Great Plains Enterprise Reporting (ER) solution. Relying on previous successes with ePartners, Earthlink trusted ePartners to implement the software within a tight budget and abbreviated timeframe.

Solution:

Working with consultants from Solver, Inc., we created a plan of action that began with project scoping and success factors and that quickly moved into the integration of Earthlink’s existing accounting system, Great Plains’ eEnterprise, with ER. Many of the advanced and specialized features that Earthlink wanted in their budgeting system required innovative programming, highly coordinated teamwork, and exceptional dedication from all project members. At the end of the compressed two-month implementation, Earthlink released its web-based budgeting and reporting system to 170 active contributors. As a result, Earthlink was able to simplify and organize the information and workflow associated with multiple budget revisions. The unprecedented level of real-time access to data and reporting meant that Earthlink could quickly and easily fine-tune financial estimates and allocations in hours rather than days. The conversion to a rolling forecast system, the migration of all financial reporting into ER, and the implementation of OLAP analytical tools, which are already underway, will allow Earthlink to build a complete financial planning and accounting system.

“We have made incredible progress over the last year in improving our financial planning processes, which have evolved from unwieldy, in-house spreadsheet systems to more efficient and accurate planning and reporting tools. After a compressed two month implementation of Great Plains Enterprise Reporting with the help of ePartners and Solver, we were able to roll out a company-wide, web-based planning solution that cut the budget cycle time nearly in half. Every aspect of our planning improved, from better communication with key contributors in the company to more information granularity, accessibility, and accountability.”
Edward Hwang - Director of Financial Planning, Earthlink

