



ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Stearns County is located in Central Minnesota just 60 miles northwest of the Minneapolis / St. Paul area. The County encompasses an area of 1,362 square miles and contains 30 incorporated cities and 34 organized townships. With a 2010 census population of 150,642, Stearns County is the State's seventh most populous county.

The county seat and largest community is the city of St. Cloud, which is located along the eastern most edge and also lies in Benton and Sherburne Counties. The city of St. Cloud, and the related services they provide, is not a part of this project.

Stearns County employs approximately 800 people in 17 departments. These positions provide services in a variety of areas including: Administration, Assessor, Attorney, Auditor-Treasurer, Building Maintenance, Emergency Management, Environmental Services, Extension, Highway, Human Resources, Human Services, Information Services, Parks, Purchasing, Recorder, Sheriff and Veterans Service.

CHALLENGE

Stearns County was looking for a permitting solution that would allow them to also improve processes in their Environmental Services department. The department was using paper files and a Microsoft Access database to track communications and issue permits. It was difficult to manage files associated with a permit and track communications accurately, which caused issues and inefficiencies. After seeking out a solution and partner to work with through a Request for Proposal process, Stearns County chose to partner with PowerObjects to implement a Microsoft Dynamics CRM solution.

Overall, Stearns County needed a solution that would:

- + **Centralize data and eliminate the need for paper notes**
- + **Enable easy tracking of communications and inquiries to ensure accurate and prompt follow up**
- + **Provide a service module to manage and monitor complaints**
- + **Streamline permit process and allow better transparency across departments**

SOLUTION

Stearns County uses Microsoft Dynamics CRM to centralize their data, track inquiries and communications, and streamline their permit process. Their system is set up as an xRM solution customized to fit their unique business needs. Stearns County selected PowerObjects as the CRM partner to help them with implementation and customizations.

"PowerObjects had a great combination of good references and a solid proposal. We spoke with another county who had worked with PowerObjects, and they had a very positive experience," says Jake Anderson, Project Manager at Stearns County. "We worked with the PowerObjects team on a plan for success beforehand, and that gave us a lot of confidence that they were the right partner for us. PowerObjects is a leader in the Dynamics CRM community - from their offerings to their events, website, and blog. If you search for anything CRM related, PowerObjects always comes up in the results."



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POWEROBJECTS' SUITE OF
POWERPACK ADD-ONS TO
CENTRALIZE THEIR DATA,
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PROVIDE A SERVICE
MODULE TO MONITOR
COMPLAINTS, STREAMLINE
THEIR PERMIT PROCESS,
AND PROVIDE BETTER
TRANSPARENCY ACROSS
DEPARTMENTS*



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“Our PowerObjects consultant listened to our challenges and explained how Dynamics CRM could help us. They mapped out how the technology could help with our processes and solve business problems. They did a great job pushing us forward and alleviating our concerns throughout the process. PowerObjects is a top tier technology partner.”

JAKE ANDERSON
Project Manager
Stearns County

SOLUTION |continued|

Stearns County originally launched Dynamics CRM to 30 users in a single department and have since expanded their use of CRM to other departments for a total 80 users. About 75% of employees in land-focused departments at Stearns County are using CRM, including the Environmental Services department, Recorder’s Office, Assessor’s Office, and Land Management division of the Auditor’s Office.

BENEFITS

With Dynamics CRM, Stearns County has improved and streamlined processes across departments. The organization has seen steady user adoption and improved transparency as well. “Before Dynamics CRM, we had a lack of transparency in the organization and no one knew what other people were doing or where they were at in the permit process. After the implementation of Dynamics CRM, one of the biggest differences was our improved visibility. Everyone here is aware of our CRM solution, they are familiar with how it works, and we have had virtually no issues with user adoption,” says Anderson. “What’s great about CRM is that we have standardized processes, and have implemented similar processes across different departments.”

Stearns County uses Dynamics CRM to track communications, inquiries, and complaints handled by Environmental Services and ensures that the correct follow-up is initiated. “Before Dynamics CRM, we had communication tracking issues,” says Anderson. “Property owners would call into the county and could potentially get different varied answers every time they called in. We had no accurate way to see who had called in, who had spoken with them, and what was asked.” Now with Dynamics CRM, Stearns County is able to log all relevant calls, emails, and appointments in CRM and tie them to a specific entity – like a parcel. They are also able to ensure that when an inquiry comes in, that inquiry is routed to the correct person to complete the job.

Stearns County manages constituent land-based complaints using cases in the Dynamics CRM service module. When they receive a formal or informal complaint, it’s sorted into a specific category and different activity functions are used to monitor those complaints.

In addition to managing communications, Stearns County also use CRM and PowerObjects’ PowerPack add-on, PowerAutoNumber, to manage their permit process. “Our permit process in Dynamics CRM is much more streamlined than what we were doing before,” says Anderson. “Our front desk begins the process by entering in basic info and tying it to a parcel entity and PowerAutoNumber assigns a permit number. We then use CRM to track information for a permit such as specific check-



CHALLENGE

Stearns County needed a solution that would allow them to issue permits and improve processes in their Environmental Services department.

SOLUTION

Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online, PowerObjects’ PowerPack add-ons

BENEFITS

- + Centralized data and eliminated the need for paper notes
- + Enable easy tracking of communications and inquiries
- + Provide a service module to manage complaints
- + Streamlined the permit process
- + Allowed better transparency across departments



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BENEFITS | CONTINUED |

lists regarding required steps and activities such as an inspection for permit. We also use workflow notifications to alert our staff as to what is completed and what still needs to be completed.” Another beneficial PowerPack add-on that is frequently used is PowerOneView – allowing users fast, centralized access to activities and related entities.

Being able to customize Dynamics CRM to fit their unique needs has helped Stearns County meet and solve challenges efficiently and effectively. “We rarely come across a business challenge that we can’t address using Dynamics CRM. We are able to use the rapid application development model and almost every time the problem can be solved more expeditiously with CRM,” Anderson adds.

The flexibility of their solution means that different departments are able to use Dynamics CRM creating interconnected systems and ensuring alignment across their organization. “One of the greatest things about Dynamics CRM is the flexibility it gives us to meet different challenges. In the public sector, local governments will do things differently and have different needs. You can go and buy an off-the-shelf permit solution, for example, but that might not work for every organization. With CRM, you can mold it to your business and you can leverage and repurpose it across your organization, which other tools wouldn’t allow,” says Anderson.

With Microsoft Dynamics CRM and PowerObjects’ PowerPack add-ons, Stearns County now has a solution that meets the needs of their organization. Dynamics CRM has helped Stearns County manage their data, track communications and inquiries, utilize a service module to manage and monitor complaints, streamline their permit process, and allow better transparency across departments. As Stearns County continues to evolve and expand their solution, they have PowerObjects as a partner to help them along the way and ensure they get the most out of their solution.

“Our PowerObjects consultant listened to our challenges and explained how Dynamics CRM could help us. They mapped out how the technology could help with our processes and solve business problems. They did a great job pushing us forward and alleviating our concerns throughout the process. PowerObjects is a top tier technology partner,” Anderson says.



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