

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Stearns County is located in Central Minnesota just 60 miles northwest of the Twin Cities area. The County encompasses an area of 1,362 square miles and contains 30 incorporated cities and 34 organized townships. With a 2015 census population of 154,708, Stearns County is the State's seventh most populous county. Stearns County employs approximately 900 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

SUMMARY

Stearns County has been working with PowerObjects since they implemented Dynamics CRM in September of 2013. ([Read original case study here.](#)) As the complexity of operations has scaled with the size of the growing county, so has the importance of Dynamics CRM.

From 30 to 300 Users

When Stearns County originally launched Dynamics CRM, it was only being used for a handful of departments and had as few as 30 users. Now, after expanding the platform into a much wider range of departments, they have over 300 users. Stearns County Project Manager, Jake Anderson, forecasts that their user count will continue to increase based on demand for CRM functionality throughout the county.

"We now have a good number of departments that are actually asking for Dynamics CRM, so it's not as if we have to go out and find different uses for it. The different parts of our business and organization come to us with ideas and we've worked to implement those successfully. From a success point of view, I would say it's been a very successful platform so far for us."

CHALLENGE

Finding a Match for Local Government

When Stearns County was originally looking for a platform, Anderson explains that the largest requirement for a solution was that it could meet the unique and multifaceted needs of a local government organization.

"You can obviously buy off-the-shelf permitting solutions for different departments, but one of the things that became clear is that those have limited functionality and the costs can really add up over time. For example, one solution might have what you need for feedlot permits but if you want to expand it into other areas, you're going to need to look for additional solutions. What Dynamics CRM presented us with was an opportunity to leverage one unified platform that can cover all of our needs and continue to grow with our county."

Supplementing Existing Platforms

Stearns County also needed a platform that would supplement deficiencies in their current systems. For example, there are certain functions missing within their tax system that they used to have to manually process via email or paper. Before Dynamics CRM, there was no easy way to track or automate these redundant processes.

Emerging from a Sea of Paper

And finally, like many local government organizations, Stearns County wanted to move away from disparate spreadsheets, outdated reports, and paper forms, lists and applications.



STEARNS COUNTY OF
CENTRAL MINNESOTA
HAS WORKED WITH
POWEROBJECTS TO
ROAD-MAP A MICROSOFT
DYNAMICS CRM CLOUD
SOLUTION THAT COULD
SCALE TO THE WHOLE
ORGANIZATION.



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"I would definitely recommend Dynamics to other local government organizations. As we've seen over the years, the initial investment really has paid off - and we're only getting started. There is a lot more functionality within Dynamics than you might originally even see. That's what I've appreciated about PowerObjects. They've helped us see that the sky's the limit with what we can accomplish with Dynamics."

JAKE ANDERSON
Project Manager
Stearns County

SOLUTIONS

Stearns County now uses Microsoft Dynamics CRM to centralize their data, track inquiries and communications, and streamline their processes. Their system is set up as an xRM solution, customized to fit the needs of a local government organization.

The largest group of Stearns County's Dynamics CRM users is based in their land-focused departments, including the Environmental Services department, Recorder's office, Assessor's office, and Land Management division of the Auditor's Office.

Dynamics CRM Use Case Examples

Environmental Services Department

- Manage permits for county parcels and platting of land
- Organize feedlots, feedlot permits, and feedlot inspections
- Track wetland projects

Assessor's Office

- Manage property transfers and related tasks
- Verify district processing
- Accept and process homestead applications via ADX Portal

Land Management

- Schedule activities for ditch projects
- Manage Land Projects
- Addressing assignment activities
- Reporting and addressing parcel-related issues

Cross-departmentally

- Streamline tax adjustments
- Platting of land

Dynamics CRM is used to manage permits within Stearns County's Environmental Services department and manage subdivisions and platting of land. The process starts in Environmental Services and then touches other departments like the Surveyor's office, and the Recorder's office.

Their Environmental Services group also manages feedlots, feedlot permits, and feedlot inspections. Additionally, they manage wetland projects, which determine where wetlands are situated through delineations and determinations.

The Assessor's office is another heavy user of Dynamics CRM. They use it for property transfers - when somebody sells or buys property. They also use it for district processing which is verifying values for various properties located in different townships.



CHALLENGE

Stearns County needed a solution that would provide a centralized database, emerge from paper form applications, and supplement deficiencies in their current systems.

SOLUTION

A system set up as an xRM solution customized to fit the needs of a local government organization.

BENEFITS

- + Better Communication
- + Faster Processing Times
- + Heightened Data Security
- + An Overall More Productive and Satisfied County



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SOLUTIONS |CONTINUED|

Stearns County also uses Dynamics CRM cross-departmentally for tax adjustments. With Dynamics CRM, if somebody's tax valuation is too low or too high and a property owner challenges it, they can now track actions and have a single view of all communication across the involved departments.

Dynamics CRM is also used in their Land Management area. They use it for managing everything from county ditch projects to activities related to address assignment.

They also use Microsoft's ADX Studio Portal with Dynamics CRM to accept online applications for septic permits and other activities related to septic systems. This will reduce the need for paper applications.

These departments are using Dynamics CRM to track activities such as phone call and emails. This allows the collaborating departments to know what is happening in real time on any given project. Anderson says that these streamlined processes have been met with excitement.

"Dynamics CRM makes things easier and more efficient for our staff which translates into far better customer experiences for our county residents and customers."

BENEFITS

All of the solutions that Dynamics CRM provides leads to better communication, faster processing times, heightened data security, and an overall more productive and satisfied county.

A Platform Fit for Local Government

The flexibility of the platform means that different departments are able to use Dynamics CRM, creating interconnected systems and ensuring alignment across the organization. When asked if Dynamics should be considered by other local government organizations, Anderson replied,

"I would definitely recommend Dynamics to other local government organizations. As we've seen over the years, the initial investment really has paid off - and we're only getting started. There is a lot more functionality within Dynamics than you might originally even see. That's what I've appreciated about PowerObjects. They've helped us see that the sky's the limit with what we can accomplish with Dynamics."

From Paper to Digital

One of the biggest benefits that Anderson has seen is the amount of information that has moved from spreadsheets and paper to Dynamics.

"Really, it's about not flying blind. For example, if a permit is issued and it's going to affect assessment value of a property, the assessors can now go out and see which permits have recently been issued as opposed to waiting for some type of monthly report or maybe not ever receiving that information. Dynamics CRM has helped streamline these processes by providing real-time information, within a single view. It makes a huge difference to all parties involved."

Successful User Adoption

Growing from 30 users to over 300 users in less than five years could be a stressful experience with some platforms. Dynamics CRM is an exception.

"I don't hear people complaining and even better than that, after several years on the platform, people are still asking for more. Departments who are not using Dynamics yet hear how great it is from other departments and want to utilize it as well. That's how I know it's successful."



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BENEFITS |CONTINUED|

Partnering with PowerObjects

“PowerObjects has been a true partner, in the sense that they work to truly understand our needs from the beginning and they want us to succeed. They are outside the box with Dynamics,” says Anderson.

NEXT STEPS

Stearns County is currently in the process of moving one of their active production orgs to the cloud. They are also working on implementing ADX Studio Portal to accept homestead applications online for their Assessor’s office. These processes will increase data security and could be expanded to eliminate the need for processing paper forms and applications over time.

In addition to those boarder functionalities, Stearns County is building an internal Dynamics CRM org for managing their internal processes related to county functions like human resources.



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