

Rapidly Growing Zoo Prepares for Continued Expansion

Brevard Zoo



Challenges

Rapidly Growing Zoo Prepares for Continued Expansion

The Brevard Zoo in Melbourne, Florida is the largest community-built zoo in the world. Over its nearly 25 years in operation, the nonprofit organization has earned 90% of its income through admissions, experiences, and food and retail sales, and the other 10% through fundraising events, individual donations, and public grants for education, expansion, and conservation initiatives.

Together, these revenue streams have grown to around \$11 million annually, due to the success of the zoo and its Treetop Trek aerial obstacle course experience. However, Brevard Zoo's finance team was muddling through duplicate data entry and several workarounds in Excel in order to massage their QuickBooks data and present it in a useful manner to the executive team at the end of each month. In order to keep up with the organization's continued growth, they needed a more robust financial management solution that could support automated workflows and deliver timely visibility into financials with helpful business context.

"We considered Blackbaud and Microsoft Dynamics GP, but quickly discovered that Sage Intacct was the most scalable solution to meet our growing needs," said Frank Fieseler, the chief financial and operations officer at Brevard Zoo. "We especially like Sage Intacct's philosophy of concentrating on core finance capabilities and enabling API interfaces to other systems."

Solutions

Combined Financial and Operation Visibility Drive Accountability

As a 501c3 nonprofit organization, being fiscally responsible is a top priority for Brevard Zoo. Sage Intacct's dimension capabilities support this effort by allowing the team to tag transactions with valuable details such as specific programs, grants, or departments, and easily filter, group, and organize all of this data for more granular reporting. "Sage Intacct's tremendous reporting and dashboard capabilities provide much more timely transparency to the entire organization," Fieseler noted. "Our executive director no longer needs to wait a week in order to understand how we stand financially. Now, we have a complete picture and can make adjustments when necessary, and we get fewer ad hoc questions because everyone can find the information they need."

With Sage Intacct, Brevard Zoo now has visibility into revenue per guest for each service, which they can use to forecast future sales, monitor when services are generating the revenue they predicted, and manage monthly budgets. By providing department managers with three-year historical averages and month-by-month budget versus actuals information for each account, Sage Intacct helps them plan more accurately. "When we implement service changes, Sage Intacct gives us the ability to track our progress throughout the month and see if a new menu or seasonal discount for our Treetop Trek attraction is having the effect we expected," shared Fieseler.



Company Overview

Opened in 1994 with a mission of wildlife conservation through education and participation, the award-winning Brevard Zoo in Melbourne, Florida is home to more than 900 animals representing 195 species from all over the world. It welcomes more than 400,000 guests annually, with 44% from outside the county, and the organization's annual economic impact exceeds \$59.5 million.

Executive Summary

Previous Software:

- Intuit QuickBooks

Results with Sage Intacct:

- Increased overall finance team efficiency by 30%
- Expedited reporting 50%
- Improved data accuracy and cut time supporting annual audit >50%
- Gained real-time visibility into operational and financial data
- Software paid for itself in <3 months

RAPIDLY GROWING ZOO PREPARES FOR CONTINUED EXPANSION

Sage Intacct's dimensions also help the zoo make sure costs and revenues stay in line with expectations for major capital projects and grant spending. "We can see in real-time where grant dollars are going and how much time is left in a project, so we spend more efficiently and make sure we don't lose opportunities due to missed grant deadlines," mentioned Fieseler.

Results

Automation Shifts Focus from Daily Entries to the Big Picture

After streamlining reporting and other manual financial processes through Sage Intacct, the zoo's finance team achieved an overall efficiency improvement of nearly 30% and sped its monthly close by 10%. With these productivity gains, Sage Intacct helps Fieseler keep his accounting team small, despite Brevard Zoo's growth.

The team can now pull individual transactions from other applications—like their third-party purchase card system, the development team's DonorPerfect software, and the point of sales system—into Sage Intacct, and have access to all the financial and operational information they need, as opposed to trying to parse monthly summary reports with no detail. "Sage Intacct lets us generate reports that we simply couldn't get from our old system, and our report preparation is at least 50% faster," said Fieseler.

"If we were still doing things manually, we'd need another headcount today and probably two or three more people to support future plans," he continued. "But thanks to Sage Intacct, we still have space to grow. I'm freed up to focus on big picture things instead of spending around half of my time worrying about daily entries, so I spend 25% more time analyzing the data and looking at where we're going."

“In addition to the tremendous value of Sage Intacct’s dashboards and dimensions, it’s a great advantage to bring statistical information into the system so easily. We monitor daily attendance from our members and the general public, and love that we can now marry the zoo’s financial information with these numbers. As a result, we can react quickly versus waiting until month-end to see if attendance makeup, food sales per capita, or other trends are out of their normal range.”



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