How AccountingDepartment.com went from accounting hindsight to advisory foresight in 2 months with Jirav

200+ clients

AccountingDepartment.com transitioned all its 200+ clients to Jirav in 2 months

5-10 mins

Amount of time it takes for desktop users to import and update numbers

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AccountingDepartment.com is a virtual firm that specializes in outsourced accounting—and it has been steadily growing since its founding in 2004. Today the firm employs more than 140 full-time, U.S.-based professionals. While many firms are moving to offshore labor, AccountingDepartment.com prefers to leverage technology to contain costs while maintaining the highly responsive, high-touch service that its clients expect. The firm serves a wide range of client industries and sizes, some with a handful of employees, others with hundreds.

Challenge

In order to hit aggressive growth targets, AccountingDepartment.com first needed to standardize processes to increase efficiency. Then it needed to expand and deepen its relationships with customers by providing higher-value advisory services. The firm's heavy reliance on a mix of Excel and QuickBooks solutions meant that its accountants were often mired in manual, time-consuming processes. Cathy Becker, a senior controller at AccountingDepartment.com, saw this inefficiency as a significant opportunity for improvement:

"Once we looked more closely at the time spent across all our clients due to manual processes, we found that it really added up quickly," says Becker. "In the QuickBooks desktop environment, for example, our accounting specialists had to download each individual client report into a PDF—locking the file and closing the books. Then we accumulate all those individual files and compile them into one file, making sure everything is in order, resizing wherever anything is in need of resizing, just buttoning up every little detail. Then it's off to review, making sure all the numbers tie in, adding in our notes, sending it to the controller, then sending it to the client. Along the way, we also had to password-protect each file to ensure security, which on its own can be surprisingly time-consuming."

Challenges overcome

- Heavy reliance on a mix of Excel and QuickBooks solutions led to manual, time-consuming processes
- Each client report required approximately one hour of time
- "Surprise" client metric requests meant last-minute, manual spreadsheet updates to incorporate additional types of reporting

Advantages delivered

- Numbers are imported automatically into Jirav each night for QuickBooks Online clients
- Visual dashboard make reports more accessible
- Firm is able to import a mix of financial and non-financial metrics to offer deeper, richer insights
- Greater efficiency opened the door to additional, more valuable FP&A capabilities

On average, the firm estimated that each report required approximately one hour of time—and that's before any remaining client surprises. "Clients often request that other metrics be added to their reports," says Becker, "so we'd have to update spreadsheets at the last minute to incorporate additional types of reporting—it just takes a lot of time."

Solution

"In the summer of 2020, we formed a team of four controllers, including myself, to conduct due diligence on financial planning and advisory solutions that fit our model and could help us achieve our goals," says Becker. "We looked at various solutions, then narrowed down our options, talking extensively with those providers and conducting deeper research to learn about their software capabilities, service, and support."

By fall, the firm had decided on Jirav, a leading solution for advanced financial planning and analysis. "We realized that while there were plenty of good choices for addressing our more immediate challenges regarding reporting, when it came to enabling our bigger-picture goal of providing advisory-level services, Jirav was in a class of its own," says Becker.

The firm's goal: to transition all its 200+ clients to Jirav by winter. Rollout would take place during the firm's busiest time, January through February. "The timing was aggressive," says Becker. "There's no way we would have targeted that timeframe without being confident that Jirav would give us the support we needed every step of the way."

For firm leaders, there was no time to waste—and a piecemeal approach wouldn't be enough. "We knew that for our strategy to work, we would have to take an all-or-nothing approach," says Becker. "We needed to truly embrace it, we needed the leadership team to support

it 100%, and we needed to roll it out to all of our clients, not just a few. Because with Jirav being used uniformly across clients, we would benefit from shared knowledge and a cohesive approach with clients—we would all be talking the same language." AccountingDepartment. com enlisted Jirav's support, including training, to ensure a focused, no-surprises rollout, launching on time in February of 2021.

Results

Following AccountingDepartment.com's successful rollout of Jirav to more than 200 clients, the firm saw benefits immediately—bringing new levels of efficiency at every step. For clients using QuickBooks Online, their numbers are imported automatically in Jirav each night. For desktop users, Becker estimates that it takes 5-10 minutes. Individual reports don't need to be password-protected because security is built into the system. As soon as the accounting team closes the books, Jirav is updated and reports—including embedded comments for clients—are immediately ready for clients. "The notes we used to write up in the email that accompanied the report PDF are now just included in the report itself," says Becker, "making it easy for them to see everything in context, all at once. The whole system is polished, professional, and impressive."

Jirav's visual dashboards make reports more accessible and bring deeper insights within reach. "Now we're giving clients executive reports with visuals showing cash, profitability, headcount and salary data if they want it—really zeroing in on what's most important to them," says Becker. "More sophisticated clients can go even deeper at a moment's notice, and less savvy clients get a lot of value out of the executive summary report on its own." With Jirav, the firm is able to import a mix of financial and non-financial metrics (such as operational and workforce data) to offer deeper, richer insights—

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>
> **CATHY BECKER,**
> Senior Controller
> AccountingDepartment.Com

helping clients gain a more complete understanding of what's happening in their business today and anticipating what is likely to happen in the future.

Today, AccountingDepartment's.com growth strategy has been activated and is already showing the results firm leaders had planned. Greater efficiency has opened the door to additional, more valuable financial planning and analysis capabilities.

Now that AccountingDepartment.com has rolled out Jirav successfully to its entire client list, firm professionals are capitalizing on the extra time they have to focus on higher-value services for clients. "We're using analytics to dive deeper into the numbers for clients, looking at industry comparatives, generally providing a higher level of advisory service for clients," says Becker. "We're already much more of a partner for clients, rather than the people who just compile reports for them." Firm leaders are also working with clients to customize their reporting through Jirav to fit their individual needs and preferences.

Clients are already taking advantage of Jirav's more advanced features. Within two months of launch, 10% had converted their basic Jirav accounts to a version that enabled advanced forecasting capabilities. That means AccountingDepartment.com controllers are not only talking to these clients about KPIs and monthly reports, but also about their forecasting needs—deepening the relationship and opening new opportunities. This

was virtually impossible without Jirav's highly efficient, standardized package for delivering these advanced capabilities to clients.

While Jirav is already showing big results for AccountingDepartment.com and its clients, Becker says they're just getting started.

"Now that we have Jirav in place, we've already started to see so many new opportunities for serving our clients better—and we have more time to pursue those opportunities," she says. Would she recommend Jirav for other firms? "Without question," says Becker. "If your firm is providing outsourced accounting services but has hit the wall when it comes to scale, Jirav is a great fit."

About Jirav

Our name sounds like "giraffe" for a reason. The giraffe is the tallest animal in the world. That means it has the broadest view of the landscape. Jirav helps you give your clients the full view of their business and see what's coming with our driver-based financial modeling plus integrated reporting and dashboards. By getting out of spreadsheets and into Jirav, you'll help your clients look forward, set goals, and track progress all in one place, enabling you to have more meaningful conversations and become the adviser your clients want you to be.

Interested in seeing Jirav for yourself?

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