Victoria University of Wellington tackles budget fatigue

CUSTOMER
Victoria University of Wellington

LOCATION
Wellington, New Zealand

INDUSTRY
Public Sector

Challenge

- Complex legacy systems, models and processes
- Constant firefighting to fix budgeting and forecasting issues
- Deadlines consistently missed or extended

Solution

- Oracle EPM Cloud Planning for integrated planning, budgeting and forecasting
- A contemporary, digital cloud-based financial and operational planning solution
- DXC Accelerate Template for Higher Education providing end-to-end application design underpinned by industry best practice

Results

- Organisation-wide best practice financial processes
- Improved business predictability; increased productivity; the ability to drive better business planning decisions
- A start to the organisation's digital transformation journey

Victoria University of Wellington tackles budget fatigue

Founded in 1897 and situated in New Zealand's vibrant, entrepreneurial capital city, Victoria University of Wellington (VUoW) is one of New Zealand's oldest and most prestigious tertiary institutions with a proud tradition of academic excellence. With more than 22,000 students, VUoW comprises three campuses and eight faculties and aspires to be one of the greatest capital city civic universities in the world.

"A major benefit for us is when organisations are very open. We have great engagement with VUoW and a secure relationship which helped us achieve so much in a short timeframe."

— Mark Simpson
   General manager – Analytics,
   Practice for Oracle,
   DXC Technology

Business challenges

In the face of increasing competition, higher education providers are under pressure to deliver superior student experiences and think strategically and innovatively about future directions, all while making tight budgets go further.

With complex and fragmented legacy systems, models and processes, there was significant replication of work across the university. Planning and budgeting processes were duplicated, with little quality and assurance of data. The university was constantly firefighting to fix budgeting and forecasting issues, with deadlines consistently missed or extended.
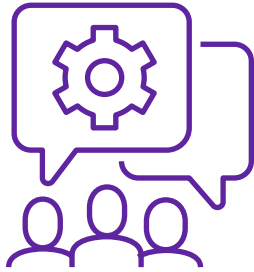
With no real system integrations, VUoW knew it was time to upgrade. To enable better business planning decisions, VUoW recognised that it needed to seamlessly connect its finance operations with all areas of the business. The educator needed a solution to streamline, standardise and improve its business processes, whilst offering options for future expansion.

Grant Gullery, FMIS Manager, VUoW said, "The notion that we were continually budgeting meant our people felt budget fatigue. Complex models caused constant firefighting to fix issues, with deadlines frequently missed or extended. The user interface also wasn't friendly, so several infrequent users required regular training and support."

Solution

When VUoW started to think about progressing its new planning and budgeting solution, a number of implementation partners were considered. DXC Technology's Practice for Oracle was selected by the university. Grant Gullery said, "DXC were

"The solution allows us to see how the university is performing at any given time and helps us respond quickly. The education sector faces significant change — including the way we provision and work. We now have a system that can adapt to changing business needs so we're confident our processes can change and the system will cope."

— **Marianna Nicolaou**
Associate director of Financial Operations, VUoW

proactive in terms of what VUoW needed. The real selling point for us was when they came to our office and facilitated workshops and demonstrations — they really understood us and talked our language and they had a lot of experience in the tertiary sector which was also key for us."

As a long-standing Oracle user, VUoW had recently selected Oracle Cloud for HCM so it made sense to select Oracle Enterprise Performance Management (EPM) for planning and budgeting since it aligned with current direction. As an incredibly happy Oracle E-Business Suite customer for 20 years, VUoW didn't feel the need for an extensive evaluation.

Industry-specific intellectual property

Oracle Planning is the world's leading planning, budgeting, forecasting and analytics solution, with functionality that has the potential to transform how organisations use financial data. To enhance the Oracle solution, DXC implemented its unique Oracle Planning Accelerate Template for Higher Education.

The suite of pre-built templates leverages DXC's in-depth knowledge of the higher education sector, functional and technical IP built up over many years, and trusted partner relationship with Oracle. They allow organisations to get up and running quicker, while providing a best practice industry guideline. The templates are designed to help

clients take an integrated approach to key tasks, such as budgeting and forecasting, student load modelling, student analysis, activity-based costing, research funding and performance improvement.

Oracle's highly scalable and cost-effective Planning Cloud and DXC's industry aligned Accelerate Templates for Oracle Planning are at the forefront of the digital revolution in the Higher Education sector.

The university's goal is to have HCM, EPM and ERP on the same cloud-based solution working together, with all processes flowing through. VUoW uses Oracle EPM for planning, budgeting, forecasting, parts of project portfolio management, and the CAPEX model. The solution supports strategic decisions around investments as well as general university operations, spend mix, and other priorities. While this wasn't the university's first SaaS system, it's the first major SaaS solution for finance. It fits into VUoW's larger cloud strategy and their vision to add value, ensure automation, and to drive timely and reliable information always.

Implementation

DXC managed the entire implementation from roadmaps and scoping through to implementation and change management, working closely with VUoW to drive significant innovation. Close collaboration ensured DXC understood where the business is headed and the latest technologies it was looking to invest in. Mark Simpson,

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The biggest challenge in this type of implementation is change management. Grant Gullery said, "Previously people dreaded another budget round. Now they're keen to interact with the system and have provided feedback that they're looking forward to where we're headed.

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VUoW went live after just six months. The first milestone was design and validation, followed by build and validation, UAT, then implementation planning and execution.

Training was another challenge since people were new to the system and didn't feel confident. DXC delivered an entire week of intense online training via MS Teams. Grant Gullery concluded, "DXC supported us in mitigating all our issues and one of the key aspects of our project — change management. They were able to pre-empt potential user concerns and build credibility within the business early. The team knew how to keep people engaged and were able to quickly address any apprehensions as they arose to keep the project moving."

Business benefits

While it's still early days at VUoW, there has been significant positive user feedback — particularly around reduced complexity. There is better understanding of the models, less fatigue, and more excitement around budgeting. Users report that models are easier to understand and interact with which leads to less time forecasting and increased productivity. Where previously, people may have been suspicious of the numbers, there is now increased positivity and confidence in the numbers being produced. Governance around the whole forecasting process has also improved.

The integration and connected processes across various applications means departments no longer work in silos. While process changes are still happening, VUoW feels confident. Marianna Nicolaou, Associate Director Financial Operations from VUoW said, "The solution allows us to see how the university is performing at any given time and helps us respond

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we can work through an issue or implement a new feature in the future. That attitude change comes from the solution's modern look and feel and ease of use, as well as our approach in getting people involved in the journey."

What the future holds

DXC has become a trusted partner engaged for further expansion and migration to drive innovation across the business. As one of the first cloud solutions implemented in the business, the success of this project will drive other IT digital transformation initiatives. VUoW now has a system that works well for core financials, with continuous improvement programs looking at new options for strategic modelling, profitability and cost management functionality. This will ensure maximum value is extracted from the Oracle investment.

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