

CASE STUDY:

Larson Financial Boosts Efficiency and Accelerates Processes with Sugar

Larson Financial Saves \$75K Annually with Sugar Implementation.

LARSON FINANCIAL

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Larson Financial, which helps tax payers with IRS or state tax debts, worked with Sugar Partner W-Systems to migrate from Sugar's Community Edition to Sugar Professional. With Sugar, Larson utilized advanced reporting functionality, increased efficiency, and doubled the speed with which it could generate client proposals. A lead de-duplication customization by W-Systems enables two people to process several thousand leads per day. In addition, Larson Financial also experienced substantial annual cost savings—from spending \$100K to \$25K.

Business Challenges

Like many successful, fast growing businesses, Larson Financial reached a point where manual, paper-based processes were simply too inefficient to sustain. To bridge the efficiency gap, the company hired more staff—an expensive and short-term solution. “We were hiring people faster than made economic sense,” recalls Asa Beck, CFO for Larson Financial. “We were throwing people at the problem so we could do what we needed to, but it was very costly.”

The Path to Success

Larson Financial evaluated several CRM solutions and chose Sugar for its cost-effective, flexible, and open platform. The company began with Sugar's Community Edition but realized users were struggling due to a lack of training and a comfort level with manual processes that kept them from realizing the benefits of CRM.

In addition, the need for advanced reporting led Larson Financial to consider options beyond Community Edition. “We were hobbled by limited reporting capabilities and were looking at a lot of time and money to create custom reports in Community Edition,” explains Beck. “So, I evaluated the various Sugar editions and found that Sugar Professional provided the advanced reporting we required and that really drove the whole decision-making process.”

To assist Larson Financial in the conversion to Sugar Professional, the company engaged Sugar Partner W-Systems. “We were very comfortable with W-Systems's knowledge of Sugar,” Beck remarks. “And their philosophy was compatible with ours: use Sugar's core functionality wherever possible and only customize when necessary.”

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Initially, Larson Financial's top priorities were ensuring that the upgrade went smoothly, including existing customizations, and training users on Sugar Professional and its advanced functionality. "W-Systems handled the user training and did requirements analysis for what would come after the upgrade," Beck comments. "And they made sure we knew what we're getting in terms of managing the application going forward. We're very happy with the decision we made to go with W-Systems."

After training the staff and making it clear that certain process changes were no longer optional, Larson Financial concentrated on the use of Sugar in its marketing group. "We focused on the marketing team because it was a smaller group and because it would derive the most near-term benefit from the solution," Beck says. For example, since Larson Financial receives leads from multiple sources—mostly electronic—W-Systems customized Sugar to identify and eliminate duplicate leads and check leads against an internal database of phone numbers. This process ensures that every lead is unique.



"We've always been very high-touch with our clients. But using Sugar, we can accomplish the same tasks in less time. So we're more efficient and it takes fewer systems to manage our clients."

Asa Beck, CFO

Success Factors

Increase in Efficiency

Larson Financial's Sugar solution has made substantial improvements to the company's business. With W-Systems's customizations, manual deduplication is a thing of the past, and two people can process several thousand leads in a day. Likewise, Sugar has increased process visibility and reporting capability, including proposal generation for prospective clients.

Decrease in Costs

With improvements in efficiency came impressive annual cost savings—from \$100K per year for custom coding and system enhancements to only \$25K for user licenses. "We're really not hard-coding very much," Beck points out. "We're making customizations within the structure of Sugar. So upgrades will be smoother and faster."

Improved Reporting

"Enhanced reporting was one of the first things we explored," observes Beck. "And with Sugar's report writer we were able to create reports that give us a better understanding of our business."

Ease of Sending Proposals

In addition, prior to the upgrade, Larson Financial created proposals in .rtf format, then printed and faxed them to prospects. Now the company sends 90 percent of its proposals via email using email templates created by another Sugar partner, Synolia. The new proposals are more professional and Beck estimates this change has also doubled the speed of the process. "They're very simple to produce and much more colorful and graphic," notes Beck.