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Nonprofit Organization simplifies processes, improves workflows, and makes strides with Charted

ExED

ExED is dedicated to providing business services to charter schools, focusing on budgeting, financial reporting, accounting, accounts payable, payroll processing, and retirement reporting alongside data management services. Charter schools have extremely specific state and national requirements around data, such as attendance reporting, school lunch data, and mandatory fiscal reporting. School lunches highlight just how important accurate data and reporting is; without this information, schools cannot get reimbursed from the various state and federal programs that help offset these costs.
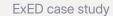
As such, ExED requires a robust financial hub for all of the accounting services they provide to their schools. With 100,000 invoices a year and 30,000 bill payments across the 60+ charter school clients they support, their system needs to be foolproof to support their accounts payable (AP) engine.

The challenge

Before setting up NetSuite, ExED was trapped on an on-premises accounting system with limited integration options. After moving to NetSuite in 2020, ExED has been able to move their accounting and financial reporting to the cloud and utilize best-in-class applications with significant integration capabilities. This became significant at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic which happened at the same time as their NetSuite migration and has continued to support their ability to be a remote work environment.

Prior to implementing NetSuite, ExED used Abila MIP, with separate and unique databases for every single one of their clients, with varying

> "We enjoyed everyone we worked with. Charted did a great job and we were impressed with the processes they had come up with for us."

Heather Escandell
Senior Technical Project Manager

customizations and setups. The manual processes and lack of standardization led to inefficient processes.

Implementing NetSuite solved ExED's need for a standardized cloud platform, and allowed for the support of a number of applications which integrate with NetSuite. This setup guarantees all financial data and information flows through NetSuite, whether procurement, general ledger information, or all AP functions. But new problems also arose, like clunky workflows and a sudden inability to print checks using a standard template.

Having the ability to streamline AP functionalities ensures they can effectively support their many charter schools and operate as efficiently as possible. As their clients are all publicly-funded schools, this efficiency is key to ensuring the school operations are successfully meeting their mandates with as little extraneous spending as possible.

How Charted helped

What led ExED to choosing Charted was their need to support multiple check templates for their many clients. The native NetSuite check template functionality was not able to meet the complexity of ExED's needs; they needed an easy-to-use solution which could provide easy customization for over 150 templates, without having to manually fiddle with each one. Risking incompliance with banks when sending checks was not an option.

After finding and implementing the check printing solution from Charted, ExED was also looking to integrate a document management tool to store the accounting backup documents in NetSuite. At first, they considered an integration between Box and NetSuite, but it proved to be time-consuming. By implementing Advanced Document Management through Charted, documents can be dragged and dropped directly into the transactional record kept in NetSuite.

Once ExED began to use NetSuite in earnest, they realized the value in having more tailored functionality designed to work specifically for accounts payable purposes.

Due to the nature of ExED's business, they have a significant user base with 100 ExED staff members using NetSuite to support over 65 different organizations with their accounting and financial reporting needs. The

> "We identified some additional approval workflows that we needed to develop. We had developed the initial workflows when implementing NetSuite, using the approval tool or engine in NetSuite, but it just wasn't working as well. We learned about Approval Automation from Charted and used it for some of the new approval workflows we had to build. They work really well; we like the functionality and even rewrote some of our original workflows built in NetSuite and transitioned them to the Charted Approval workflows."

Tait Anderson
CFO & COO

processes developed to ensure a smooth workflow are absolutely crucial to ensuring an efficient process that maintains strong internal controls. When so many different people are using one system, standardized processes are essential to also maintaining order; ensuring everyone clicks on the same button, adds comments in the same location, and rejections are stored in the same place not only makes things easier to track, it also makes the system easier to learn for new users. Standardized approval workflows keep things the same across all clients, ensuring the work is easier to navigate and more efficient. The same workflows ensure the same rules are applied no matter who the client is for all accounting teams.
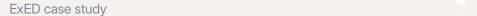
Results

One of the changes implemented by Charted shows the importance of understanding the intricacies of financial reporting when setting up transaction processes. ExED's original custom process to handle checks, payments, and vendor credits resulted in transactions showing up on their financial reporting before the payments had been approved. Charted developed a custom solution within the approval workflow, so requests don't impact the general ledger and don't show up on any financial reports until the requests are fully approved. While this was a small process change, it had a large impact on overall financial reporting. Other small changes, like where and how an approver could provide feedback on a specific transaction, were also improved by new and improved processes made possible by better functionality via Charted solutions.

> "The workflows we used previously were NetSuite workflows, native to NetSuite functionality. We had a lot of them and they weren't smooth processes. Sometimes they would time out, or have random issues where the workflows would get stuck. It may seem like a small issue, but they didn't have good solutions if approvers had something that needed to be changed, or we needed to provide feedback to users. When we started using custom workflows [with Charted] we saw a significant improvement—the transactions were smooth and there were never any issues."
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> Heather Escandell, Senior Technical Project Manager

Premium Support

> "Premium Support is a good backup, like a safety blanket. NetSuite is so important to our work that if it goes down or doesn't work, a large portion of our operations just stop. Premium Support is really helpful and has proven important in situations where we do run into an issue and can't figure it out."
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> **Tait Anderson**
> CFO & COO

ExED also uses Premium Support from Charted, providing NetSuite support and expertise to solve administrative requests. Relying on their support representatives, who are trained on the specific business and needs of ExED, ensures they can navigate new functionality, questions, or issues easily, whether through a quick resolution or new custom workflows.

For small teams without a dedicated NetSuite Administrator like ExED, Premium Support is a lifeline to solving the kinds of problems a complicated ERP setup can have, especially with multiple significant integrations.

To learn more about Charted AP Automation, including Approval Automation, Advanced Document Management, and Check Printing, click here.

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