SMITH is the leading agency delivering fully integrated digital commerce solutions for brands including Microsoft, AT&T, Cisco, and Honeywell. The company leverages expertise in technology, design, and user experience, to create a positive interaction between the brands they serve and their consumers. Recently, Forrester hailed the company as, “A new breed of Global Commerce Service Providers (GCSP) — an evolution of agency, consultancy, and systems integrator.”

The SMITH brand was launched in 2012 following the merger of leading internet marketing and technology company, Ascentium, and global ecommerce service provider, Cactus Commerce. Combining the two companies uniquely positioned the agency to solve client problems, but it also introduced major operational challenges. They were both using many different systems and homegrown tools that were clunky and cumbersome. After an initial settling-in period, the primary focus was looking at how to simplify operations to be more efficient.

SMITH Automates Operations and Frees Up 400 Billable Hours with Mavenlink
THE CHALLENGE

Wasting Time

Following the merger, SMITH faced the challenge of trying to operate the business using a plethora of tools that were not capable of integrating with one another. Both organizations had systems for time capture, expense management, resource management, and project management. They didn’t trust the reports in the homegrown tools, and all the useful data was locked in disparate systems. The impact was an inordinate amount of time required to collect, populate, cleanse, and pivot relevant data in spreadsheets.

From Steven Bergman, Director of Business Operations at SMITH, “Before Mavenlink, I spent most of my week pulling data from multiple systems, to make sure it was clean so we could discuss how we were doing.”

The spreadsheet madness caused two especially painful challenges for SMITH — tracking project profitability and resource utilization. It was nearly impossible for SMITH to make real-time changes that could improve profits. “We spent all our time trying to compile extensive amounts of data, and that left almost no time to analyze it. With the speed of projects and resourcing challenges, we couldn’t be proactive.”

FAVORITE MAVENLINK FEATURE

The Simple UI

“SMITH was looking for a 21st century solution with a simple, clear, and easy to use interface. One of the things we really like about Mavenlink is its inherent simplicity. It’s simple to understand, simple to implement, and simple to adapt to the way our business wanted to run. The malleability of the product, particularly on the reporting side, was a primary reason we selected Mavenlink.”

— Steven Bergman, Director, Business Operations, SMITH

FROM THE SOURCE

“We spent all our time compiling extensive amounts of data, and that left almost no time to analyze it. We couldn’t be proactive.”

— Steven Bergman, Director, Business Operations, SMITH
THE SWITCH TO MAVENLINK

One System, Many Capabilities

The tipping point for SMITH came from the desire to have better information. “One day our COO asked me why it always took so long to get accurate and reliable reports,” said Steven. “He was right. It shouldn’t take this long. I knew there had to be a better way.” SMITH set out to find a tool that helped to consolidate systems, ease operations and offer more visibility and control into profitability and utilization.

Standardized Best Practices

Mavenlink not only provided the customization SMITH required, it also provided best practices. “We wanted to take advantage of the thinking baked into the product,” Steven added. “For example, we adopted the Resource Forecasting approach. It just worked.”

Financial Dashboards Increase Visibility & Control

According to Steven, Mavenlink Insights is considered the team’s operational “home base” because it provides a high-level view of what’s going on in the business. Access to meaningful information has allowed SMITH insight into new project metrics such as gross margin variance.

A New Way to Manage Resources

“Mavenlink enables us to easily (and more accurately) track project costs, which allows us to understand the profitability impact of resources and how our resource planning is impacting overall project financial success.”

FROM THE SOURCE

“Before Mavenlink, we used to track everything in hours. We did that because it’s easy. Mavenlink allows us to understand the profitability impact of resources and how our resource planning is impacting overall project financial success.”

— Steven Bergman, Director, Business Operations, SMITH
The Results

Saved Over 800 Hours of Annual Administrative Work
Mavenlink provides consolidated project planning, management, and forecasting functionality that allows SMITH to better understand resource capacity constraints and billable utilization. According to Steven, “The reporting in Mavenlink has eliminated 2 days a week of work manually gathering data, which saves us 800 hours of annual administrative work.”

Freed Up 400 Billable Hours for Potential Revenue Generation with New Capacity for Work
Mavenlink Insights offers extensive reporting on project KPI’s, for example overall project health, expense submissions, and billable utilization. “We now live by the billable utilization report in Mavenlink,” Steven says. These automated reports have eliminated the need for project managers to do manual internal status reports. According to Steven, “This has freed up 400 billable hours to do more billable work, for increased revenue generation.”

Increased On-time Entries To Over 95%
Mavenlink provides SMITH consultants a single, simple interface for time and expense entry, no matter where the consultant is physically located. This has increased the weekly compliance for time submission “on-time” from less than 90% to 95%+ after implementing Mavenlink.