Sweetser

Sweetser is a non-profit community mental health provider with a statewide network of care offering services in mental and behavioral health, developmental, and educational services. The company serves more than 20,000 children and adults each year with more than 950 employees working at its 41 locations throughout Maine.

As part of the effort to replace their Sage HRMS and timecard solutions, Sweetser conducted in-depth reviews of multiple HCM solutions on the market. They were looking for a complete HR, payroll, and benefits solution with more manageable costs than their previous solutions offered. "We were also excited about the bells and whistles offered with Vista, like performance management and document management," explained Holly Hall, Director of HR at Sweetser.

Sweetser opted to have PDS host their Vista environment and went live with Vista's HR, Payroll and Benefits modules at first and has since also deployed Vista Time, Self-Service and Workflow modules. Implementation of Vista Analytics and Performance Management are next on the list.

The mental health provider's primary focus was to gain efficiencies within the entire organization and to offer self-service options to their employees along with having a single repository of information to report against. It also needed to provide them with real-time information and analysis to assist leadership in strategic planning and operations.

Rolling Out Open Enrollment

Sweetser's benefits enrollment process was primarily paper-based and, therefore, extremely time intensive. Every July 4th weekend, it would take a team of three people to enter all of the benefits data manually for the employees over a four-day period. The process entailed many bottlenecks, including ensuring they collected all the forms from all the employees, following up multiple times with employees with missing forms, dealing with forms lost in the mail, making sure they have all the necessary approvals, etc. Once the data was entered, they would then have to put all the information into an Excel spreadsheet to send to the third-party benefits providers.

Vista's open enrollment processing feature allows Sweetser to select their new benefits year changes, without impacting their current benefits information. This includes the ability to change eligibility criteria, premium calculations, valuation formulas, and employee coverage selections. Vista provides an open enrollment wizard for employees to make their open enrollment elections through self-service.

Through Vista's self-service open enrollment wizard, employees can easily make their open enrollment elections themselves and the HR team just needs to run reports and review them, saving days of work. It has streamlined the process allowing the employees to enter their selections online, eliminating the HR staff's data entry requirements, streamlining data collection, and enabling the data to feed directly into the benefit providers' systems.

Sweetser also has a new hire orientation for approximately 6-10 new employees every Monday. With Vista, new hires are easily able to enroll online, using Vista's current enrollment wizard, saving time for the staff on a weekly basis as well.

"People don't like change, but we were able to make this transition with employees that have been here for 30 years," said Hall. "We were able to roll it out to all of our locations and have found it is well worth the time it takes to configure the benefits changes in Vista each benefit year, in order to put everything at the fingertips of our employees. This is a big deal in time savings for us!"

Saving Time with Vista Time

Before Vista, Sweetser also used paper timecards for its 900+ employees—another labor-intensive process. With the Vista Time cloud-based time and attendance tool, employees easily enter their time online or via mobile devices, and their managers can review and approve it online.

Previously, three employees from the payroll department would work 10-hour days Monday and Tuesday to make the 5:00 p.m. deadline on Wednesday for payroll. Now with everything online, two staff members can complete the payroll by early Wednesday.

"Having a system to track when timecards are approved and knowing who to follow up with for missing information saves us a great deal of time," commented Hall. "We are also saving trees, actually forests, eliminating the paper timecards and the need to print out emails to prove someone approved a timecard online."
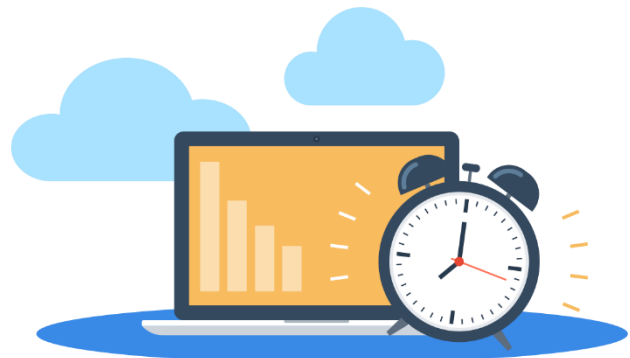
Reporting Valuable Information

Sweetser is gradually taking advantage of more and more features in Vista. "The Issue Detective has really made our jobs easier," said Hall. "It helps us find incorrect information in our database and provides us with reports so that we can audit the necessary data." The Issue Detective is designed to find inconsistencies that may disrupt important procedures and processes so that the team can verify and correct these inconsistencies.

"We always have people asking for various information for reporting purposes, such as how many people we have here or how many people live there," explains Hall. "We've been able to leverage Vista's EasyAsk query tool to extract data from Vista. It allows us to put in criteria for what we are looking for in the moment and report out the requested information. It's very helpful."

Easing the Transition of Data

Since implementing Vista, Sweetser has acquired an additional 200 employees. On top of the HR team's everyday responsibilities, adding all these new employees to the system could have been a daunting task for the team. Hall explained that they were able to leverage Vista's import feature to bring over the majority of the information on these new employees. "We downloaded the information from the old system to an Excel spreadsheet and then easily imported it into Vista, eliminating a majority of the manual data entry and saving a tremendous amount of time for our team."

The import feature also saves them time each year when changing all the pay increases in the system for their 950 employees. They are able to import all the increases at once and not have to go into each employee's record and enter the increase—another time savings for Sweetser's HR team.

Sweetser continues to maximize their ROI by leveraging the capabilities of Vista. They look forward to rolling out Vista Analytics, which will provide even more insights.

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