

Town of Randolph (Massachusetts)

"We chose VADAR and Covisia because they are leaders in deploying financial management and network infrastructure solutions for Massachusetts towns. Their solution is helping us work towards our goal of being recognized as a forward-thinking community in Massachusetts when it comes to financial management."

Richard Brown, Principal Assessor Town of Randolph

The Challenge

The Town of Randolph had reached the point where it needed to upgrade its financial software systems - for financial as well as technological reasons. "We were operating under statutory basis of accounting, which is the bare minimum legally required by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts," said Richard Brown, Principal Assessor for the Town of Randolph. "But the Massachusetts Department of Revenue had been encouraging us to adopt the Uniform Massachusetts Accounting System (UMAS). We also realized we could function more efficiently with a new system that would help us with reporting, budget planning and collections."

The town thus needed to find a technology partner that could help with the transition to the new system and upgrade the overall technology infrastructure. The existing AS400 system had been installed in 1995, so the town had limited e-mail services and end-user PCs were not networked. If a person from one office wanted to share a file with a user from another office, the file had to be transported manually. The town also realized a new financial software system and technology infrastructure were necessary so that it could develop financial strength and ensure all financial records remained in order. "We had been working towards this goal for a couple years," Brown said. "Then when the funding came through in 2006, we could proceed on finding technology partners to help us."

The Solution

To satisfy state requirements and to ensure that it deployed an effective financial software system and technology infrastructure at a reasonable cost for the taxpayers of Randolph, the town considered several technology partners. For the financial software system, the town chose VADAR Systems, which specializes in municipal financial software that provides tax billing, collection, fund accounting, payroll, human resources, and DPW/utility services. VADAR has deployed financial software solutions for more than 60 large and small Massachusetts cities and towns.

"We primarily selected VADAR because they have a solid track record with many successful deployments in Massachusetts," Brown said. "VADAR is familiar with the Massachusetts reporting requirements, so they had previously solved many issues we might encounter."

It also helped influence Randolph's decision that VADAR offered the most competitive price. "VADAR's experience helps keep the cost competitive," Brown said. "They don't have to reinvent the wheel for each new deployment - they have a deployment process already in place that accelerates deployment time."

Key Benefits of the Covisia/VADAR Systems Solution

- The wide range of applications and services provided "a-la-carte" by the two companies allowed Randolph to configure the ideal solution for their specific needs.
- The town's computer network is now more reliable.
- Town employees function more efficiently, with a modern computer infrastructure and an up-to-date financial software system based on the Uniform Massachusetts Accounting System (UMAS) standards.
- All town employees can easily access data, shared files and printers at Town Hall from remote town offices.
- The town now provides improved customer service as citizens and businesses receive information faster when requested.
- Reporting capabilities allow the town to institute more detailed spending plans and budget projections as well as monitor delinquent accounts more closely.

For the technology infrastructure, the servers and the networked PCs that would allow end-users to easily access the VADAR financial software, the town relied heavily on input from VADAR. "As with the financial software system, we also considered several partners for deploying the technology infrastructure," Brown said. "VADAR had worked often with Covisia Solutions, Inc. so we knew the two companies together offered a winning combination."

Covisia Solutions, Inc. provides information access, security and IT support services that enable clients to work more effectively and increase focus on their core business. This includes helping end-users access applications and managing entire IT environments.

"We were particularly impressed that Covisia is certified in Citrix, which was a key technology to our overall solution because we needed to give users the ability to access information from remote town offices," Brown said. "Covisia had also spearheaded several nearly identical deployments in other Massachusetts communities, and they had experience with the specific hardware and software configuration we planned to deploy."

In addition, as part of the deployment, Covisia conducted an on-site evaluation that helped determine how Randolph should build the system so it could accommodate future improvement and expansion.

Both VADAR Systems and Covisia were highly recommended to the Town of Randolph by another Massachusetts town - Fairhaven. "They went through a nearly identical implementation," Brown said. "Their successful install closely mirrored what we were planning."

The deployment of the VADAR Systems financial software and Covisia Systems technology infrastructure proceeded smoothly. Converting the data from the town's old COBOL system to VADAR's financial software system was challenging, but VADAR was able to deliver the resources necessary to get the job done.

The Benefits

The Town of Randolph computer network is now a modern, stable environment with an up-to-date financial software system based on the UMAS standards. The system functions reliably, and all town employees can easily access the data they need to deliver services to residents and businesses. The network is also available to departments that are not located right in Town Hall. They can access the VADAR system and other applications just as though they were in the main office.

The combined VADAR/Covisia solution has also given the Town of Randolph an integrated financial software solution that allows all of its town departments to look up information, track budgets and run reports. "This has helped with departmental accountability," Brown said. "It's much easier for each department to monitor their own activities."

"VADAR and Covisia worked very well together," Brown added. "It was really like working with one company. They have worked together in several communities and developed a good working relationship. If a technical issue is borderline between which company should handle their issue, they work together until it is solved. If one of the companies identifies something that is an issue the other company should solve, they know exactly which support engineer to refer us to at the other company. Both companies have seen the types of challenges we encountered."

The citizens and businesses of Randolph also benefit from VADAR's partnership with Virtual Town Hall, for which VADAR is the local support company for Massachusetts. "Because we have upgraded the technology infrastructure on all levels, the average citizen now sees the town web site as much more modern," Brown said. "And town departments can generate information on their own without having to wait for Town Hall. They can respond faster to taxpayers."

In the future, the town is considering having VADAR implement a purchase order package as well as a payroll upgrade. The town is also working with Covisia to upgrade its disaster recovery plans and to create an off-site, real time data backup appliance.

As a follow-up to the deployment, Covisia now provides on-going managed technical support services. "They are just like an internal IT department," Brown said. "Covisia makes sure all of our servers, switches, routers and PCs stay up and running, and if we have an issue specific to VADAR's software, Covisia brings them right in to help."

In summary

As demonstrated with the Town of Randolph, VADAR and Covisia each provide the municipal marketplace with an outstanding array of applications and services. Combining both companies together on a project – whether large or small – gives every municipality the opportunity to affordably achieve its individual goals.

Jack FitzGibbons, longtime Randolph Treasurer/Collector, added, "After we finished comparing balances for real estate, personal property and tax title accounts, all of them, including the amounts due and credit balances, agreed to the penny. We realize and appreciate the time and effort required to do this. You are to be congratulated for a superb job well done."

