



ISA Provides Impartiality to Assist Highmark in Choosing a Budgeting Software Application

Highmark was created in 1996 by the consolidation of two Pennsylvania licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. With different skills, talents, potential, and backgrounds, Highmark has become one of the nation's largest and most successful health insurers as they strive to harness the power of diversity in the workplace and in the community. As a result, Highmark provides access to affordable, quality health care, leading to individuals living longer, and healthier lives. In the business for over 66 years, Highmark currently has over 4.4 million members in Pennsylvania and services their health needs through providing fully insured and self-funded health products to everyone.

Recently, Highmark faced a challenge. They needed to purchase a web-based software product to facilitate Budgeting and Planning. Highmark wanted the best application — a tool that could do it all.

THE CHALLENGE

Highmark had pushed their existing budgeting system to its limits. The process was slow, prone to errors, and did not support the dynamic analysis needs of Highmark's management. The budgeting team was supporting three separate databases and subsets of these disparate databases were distributed to and consolidated from 600 cost center managers. Once consolidated, reporting on the information was static and not user-friendly.

As a result, Highmark wanted a web-based tool that would tie the entire budgeting and planning process together in a seamless fashion. Highmark had 90 days to choose the right solution or suffer through another year with an inefficient process.

ISA's challenge was to help Highmark gather the internal budgeting and financial reporting requirements, identify the budget software applications available in the market, and provide guidance during the solicitation for a budgeting software application that would enable Corporate Finance to make the proper decision.

THE SOLUTION

Highmark selected ISA as an independent advisor because of ISA's in-depth industry knowledge, experience in the budgeting and planning process, and a

thorough understanding of the current software vendors. Highmark also preferred ISA's flexible approach that complemented their own internal skills and allowed for a very cost-effective use of outside help. ISA moved quickly as they had less than three months to document Highmark's needs, facilitate vendor selection, and guide Highmark through to final negotiations.

The ISA and Highmark teams worked together using Highmark's existing methodology for needs analysis and software selection. ISA assisted Highmark in turning user requirements into demonstration scripts for all the software vendors. The demo scripts accomplished two goals:

- All vendors performed precisely the same tasks in the same order allowing for effective comparison
- The demonstrations focused only on activities relevant to Highmark

The teams developed and utilized a matrix to score the product functionality as well as other critical success factors such as vendor customer support and the vendor's financial viability. The vendor matrix allowed the team to narrow the field from a total of six vendors to a shortlist of two. The final two products were reviewed by the Highmark technology group and were determined to fit within the IT infrastructure. The Highmark team was armed with the necessary information to select their top choice.

THE RESULT

Highmark was able to focus and accomplish their goal of finding a web-based budgeting and planning solution in a very short timeframe. The funding was approved and the implementation of the new web-based budgeting and planning system was underway, leaving the appropriate time for design, build, test and training.

If the needs analysis and software selection had been delayed, the Highmark team would not have had time to rollout a new solution in time for budget season. ISA helped to meet the aggressive timeframe by bringing the right experience to help Highmark make the right choice.

ABOUT ISA CONSULTING

Innovative Systems Associates is a technology consulting firm focused on helping large companies, across all industries turn their corporate data into valuable information for competitive advantage. ISA was founded in 1995 with a vision of providing only the highest quality consultants to carry out this mission. Visit our web site at www.isaconsulting.com.

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*"We needed help to
define our requirements
and to select the right
solution. ISA Consulting
brought business
expertise,
implementation
experience and
marketplace knowledge
to the table."*

*– By Robert Farber,
Manager,
Cost Management*



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