Replacing General Ledger with Solution from Microsoft Business Solutions Great Plains and IDT Consulting Gives Miles Kimball a New, Strong Foundation

A leader in the business of the direct marketing of gifts, cards and household products, Miles Kimball provides customers with a diverse line of products ranging from affordably priced gifts and household gadgets to photo storage and display to accessories for the home.

The Challenge

In 2003, Miles Kimball was processing an excess of 3 million orders per year. However, as the company was approaching its 70th anniversary, they realized that their existing general ledger was no longer a practical solution for handling the needs of their successful company. The existing general ledger had not been updated in roughly 10 years and was based on mid-1980s batch processing technology. The out-of-date system was fairly rudimentary and did not have the necessary reporting capabilities and other desired functionality to keep everyone up-to-date and informed and keep processes running smoothly.

> Miles Kimball sought to replace its existing accounting system with a flexible, affordable, easy-to-use system with outstanding reporting capabilities.
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> IDT Consulting and Microsoft Business Solutions provided all those benefits — and more.

Larry Baier, Application Designer at Miles Kimball, noted that the existing system was "very restrictive" with "cumbersome reporting tools." It was difficult and time consuming to create customized reports so that individual users could view the financial data in ways appropriate to their needs. Realizing the need to update and upgrade, Miles Kimball began their search for a replacement system.

Their key criteria included:

- Strong reporting capability
- Robust ad hoc reporting capability
- Trouble-free maintenance
- Easy-to-learn report writing
- Ability to connect with other systems
- Ease and speed of access to improve timeliness of month-end close
- Capability to originate electronic fund transfers and check dispersements

The Solution
After reviewing multiple products and vendors, Miles Kimball selected IDT Consulting and Microsoft Business Solutions – Great Plains as the solution that best fit their business and their budget. Confident in Microsoft's commitment to their products and IDT Consulting's dedication to helping companies get real value out of their financial information by implementing solutions that provide access to decision-driving information with powerful financial and process applications, Miles Kimball was confident that they had made the right choice.

That's not to say there weren't some anxieties around the project. Miles Kimball's chief concern was the integration of their new financial software with Ecometry, their commerce solution. However, their apprehension vanished as IDT Consulting began their work. IDT worked with a third party product to complete the complex integration and made sure everything was running smoothly and that Miles Kimball was able to get all the reporting capabilities they needed.

The new Microsoft Great Plains system allows Miles Kimball's 25 users to integrate from Ecometry to process Payables invoices, general ledger entries, and revenue transactions. After these transactions are processed, they are able to process Financial Reporting Extender (FRx) statements and publish to FRx Webport for upper management to review and drill down on their own department's financial statements. Through security on FRx Webport, managers only have the ability to see their department's information. Miles Kimball is also using MICR so they can have their Accounts Payable checks automatically signed when printed.

The Results
Once implemented, Miles Kimball immediately began seeing the results of their new and improved system. Some of the most notable benefits include:

- **80% reduction in month-end close time.** What once was a two week process is now cut to just two days. The automated month-end procedures including producing final financial statements and analysis reports have saved accounting department employees several hours each month. Using the FRx Web Port has improved efficiency of distributing the month-end financial statements to managers in a timely, electronic manner.

- **Increased efficiencies in Accounts Payable and cash management processes.** "The biggest improvements were in AP and cash management," revealed Baier. "The ability to use different payment methods eliminated a lot of manual work and use of the bank reconciliation tools has improved workflow in cash management." Employees have been given a straightforward, consistent focus for managing accounting data, which has lowered overall administrative costs and has provided tight control over the financial heart of the Miles Kimball organization. Expenses are being managed more effectively with comprehensive vendor information,

payment scheduling and tracking, and up to-the-minute answers to the current cash flow status.

- **Dramatically improved reporting.** Miles Kimball is now able to produce meaningful financial statements from the general ledger without resorting to spreadsheets. Authorized staff of Miles Kimball can also use the Web report-viewing capabilities of Microsoft FRx to examine financial reports in a Web browser.

- **Reduction in errors, omissions, and duplications.** Now that many once-manual processes are automated, mistakes that happened with the old system due to user error have been virtually eliminated. Accuracy was also increased because of the ability to copy, void, delete or correct general ledger transactions with full audit control.

- **Decrease in the number of general ledger accounts.** Multidimensional analysis allows Miles Kimball to define any type of analysis grouping needed, including department, product lines, regions, or employees, and set up an unlimited number of analysis codes to analyze any facet of their business. They are also able to automatically allocate transaction amounts to different groups or projects and post to Multidimensional Analysis tables for reporting and complete analysis capabilities.

With its updated financial management system, Miles Kimball looks forward to the future. One of the things they like about Microsoft Great Plains is the confidence they have that they can continue to build on it. For its next step, the organization is considering adding a manufacturing module and an eRequisitions module to further enhance their system.

"This is definitely a solution that can grow with us," says Baier. "We have been very happy with Great Plains and IDT Consulting and are confident in the ability of both to continue to meet our needs as we grow."

IDT Consulting (**www.idtconsulting.com**) was founded with the sole focus of helping companies harness the power of information through Business Management solutions. For companies who recognize the value of integrating and streamlining their back- and front-office systems, IDT Consulting's sister company, Integrated Document Technologies, offers solutions to reduce paper, automate business processes and enable regulatory compliance. Working together, they have become leading providers of a variety of business technologies.

Whether you're planning a new ERP/Financial or CRM Solution, adding content management capabilities, or exploring the combined power of multiple technologies, IDT Consulting's resources and expertise can help you make sense of everyday business transactions. IDT Consulting is a single-source knowledge base for system design, integration, customization, implementation and long-term support.