

Mission Driven Research Overcomes Legacy ERP Challenges by Jumping to Unanet

Motivation for Seeking a New ERP Solution

To support a growing engineering firm's need for reliable and accurate timekeeping and accounting data for its government projects. After struggling with its initial Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) provider, MDR sought an ERP platform that delivered the reporting capabilities they needed with a favorable user experience and higher quality service.

To support its rapid growth, MDR chose a competitive project-based ERP and quickly regretted the user experience, customer service, and constant need to pay for third-party services. Despite having to pay for two ERPs, the return for moving to Unanet was clear thanks to the overall reduced cost of ownership, support, and ease of use that Unanet brought them.

The Challenge

Prior to implementing Unanet, MDR implemented another ERP system that actually moved its timekeeping and accounting practices backwards in many ways. After doubling in size in only a few years' time during the COVID pandemic, the company required more efficiency. In 2020, MDR transitioned from using spreadsheets to a competitor ERP system.

The company experienced multiple challenges with its ERP, including:

- **Poor usability.** MDR's legacy ERP solution was difficult to navigate and had low adoption levels. Employees often reverted to using spreadsheets stored across multiple locations. MDR's Director of Accounting Kristina Whiteaker chalked this up to the platform's complicated interface, noting, "Over a year into using it, I never understood the 'why' behind many of the steps I took."



Mission Driven Research provides technical service support to the U.S. government. It currently has 53 employees, doubling its workforce since 2021. The 10-year-old company has three missions at its core: to provide excellent service to its customers, employees, and community.

- **Costly implementation.** To derive real value from the product, MDR was forced to continuously purchase additional modules due to limitations in the legacy solution. Issues with the ERP's payroll feature also led to MDR paying thousands of dollars in IRS fees due to a lag time in reporting.
- **Heavy reliance on external consultants.** MDR had to rely on external consultants to generate essential reports. According to Whiteaker, "As long as we used it, I knew there would always be consultants in my future."
- **Lack of real-time data.** The legacy solution's timekeeping feature could not provide real-time data, which proved problematic when internal teams needed to share information.
- **Inconsistent customer support.** MDR often experienced difficulty in contacting the legacy provider's customer support. The success manager typically diverted them to the company's IT support team, which often led to long wait times and unresolved issues.

A year after implementing its previous ERP system, the company experienced buyer's remorse. Only 30% of the way through its contract, MDR grew frustrated and started looking closer at Unanet as a solution to its problems.

The ERP Solution

MDR's legacy ERP solution just didn't work for its business needs. Because of this, they chose Unanet GovCon ERP for the following reasons:

- **Quick and effective implementation.** MDR swiftly integrated Unanet into its operations, receiving active support throughout the entire process. "It was scary to introduce a new solution mid-year, but we didn't want to live with a bad process for another 9 months," said Whiteaker. She added that with Unanet, "communication stayed open" leading to a more streamlined implementation process.
- **User-friendly interface.** Unanet's simple but dynamic user-friendly interface delighted users across the company.
- **Real-time data.** MDR gained immediate access to accurate, real-time monthly data through Unanet. "Seeing things developing in real time was exciting for us," said Whiteaker.
- **More reliable reporting.** Unanet's advanced reporting features – such as its timesheet pie chart – provided managers with the easily consumable data they needed to make informed decisions.
- **Efficient payroll collaboration.** The process of interfacing with the payroll department was significantly improved, allowing for thorough verification of labor distribution numbers and access to valuable data for the payroll team.

The Approach

To ensure the company avoided its experience with its previous provider, MDR took the following steps to guarantee they had the right fit this time around:

- **Empower future success by cutting ties with solutions that don't work.** MDR was in the tough position of having to adopt a second ERP tool while still paying for the first due to the first solution's poor performance. Despite this representing a sunk cost for the firm, this wasn't a hard sell for company leadership. "They strongly disliked our old provider," said Whiteaker, "and Unanet made everyone's lives so much easier." This led to MDR implementing Unanet despite still paying for its legacy solution – and doing so gladly, as the accounting team calculated that the savings and efficiency from Unanet would outweigh the costs of paying for two ERPs.
- **Talk to your colleagues.** Whiteaker advises companies to perform their due diligence before deciding by getting feedback from other GovCons. "Talk to other people in the industry," she said. "Talk to other people using the product. Vet your implementor before blindly saying, 'Let's do this.'" Whiteaker's colleagues with experience using Unanet expressed their love for the platform, which helped make the decision easy.
- **Ask informed questions.** Thanks to her extensive research with her community of colleagues, Whiteaker knew which feature questions to ask about and, more importantly, why these features were essential in the daily life of a finance leader. When Whiteaker met with Unanet for a demo, she knew exactly what she was looking for in an ERP based on her prior experience. She asked about the specific features and reports MDR needed and was excited to hear Unanet could deliver them.



The customer experience between Unanet and our old provider has been night and day. With our old system, I was given a number to call or an email address. There were multiple steps to receive support and it was always frustrating. With Unanet, my customer success manager is a real person I have a relationship with. When I need help with support, they're always there with a direct connection."

– Kristina Whiteaker, Director of Accounting



We started seeing benefits so soon after implementing Unanet. Everything has been super smooth. Unanet's made my life so much easier."

– Kristina Whiteaker,
Director of Accounting

Impact

After implementing Unanet, MDR observed remarkable improvements in several areas:

- **Streamlined reporting.** The once cumbersome process of sending labor reports, which took days to compile, was reduced to a mere 20 minutes.
- **Improved dashboard.** The homepage dashboard facilitated easy viewing of month-end close reports.
- **Enhanced customer support.** Unanet's customer support quality was incomparable with the legacy system, with MDR being able to directly contact its customer success manager. This made the company feel seen, heard, and valued despite its small size.



More than 3,700 project-driven organizations depend on Unanet to turn their information into actionable insights, drive better decision-making, and accelerate business growth. To learn more about Unanet's ERP and CRM solutions for government contracting firms, visit <https://unanet.com/erp-for-govcon/overview> or contact us at 703-429-1236.