



## MANER COSTERISAN HELPS CS PARTNERS MANAGE MULTIPLE CHARTER SCHOOLS WITH EFFICIENCY AND TRANSPARENCY



### CS Partners

**CS PARTNERS** is a passionate Educational Service Provider (ESP) and the second-largest charter school management company in Michigan, providing a full-service management solution for multiple schools in the state. From personnel to financial management, legal matters to curriculum and instruction—the organization implements innovative solutions to help schools achieve their goals.

#### BUSINESS CHALLENGES

For CS Partners, transparency is at the core of their mission, particularly when it comes to financial management for their charter schools. They must comply with the Michigan Public School Accounting Manual's extensive chart of accounts and create annual reports for the state, as well as monthly reports for each school's board and leaders.

With rapid growth, the organization went from managing 7 schools to 19 in just a few years. Laura Carpenter, Director of the Budget and Accounting Department for CS Partners, remembers the struggles. "We were using QuickBooks to manage all financial operations for our schools and needed something more robust. Not only did we have a 26-digit chart of accounts QuickBooks couldn't handle, we were duplicating a lot of effort and entry."

Another major issue was lack of efficiency and controls with purchase requisitions and payables. Schools purchase items on their own and would manually approve invoices and then mail them to CS Partners for payment, who then manually reviewed and stamped each check with a signature. "We cut hundreds of checks every week so this was very time consuming," says Laura.

#### THE MANER COSTERISAN SOLUTION

Laura and her team received a list of every accounting system used by schools in the state and did an exhaustive search for software and vendors. After a referral from their CPA firm to talk to Maner Costerisan, they were impressed with Maner's Microsoft Dynamics GP and ReQlogic integrated solution. "We liked that Maner was local to us and the solution they presented ticked all the boxes for us. As novices at buying software, we felt they could support us very well and I knew Great Plains had been around a long time as a tried-and-true accounting system," Laura said.

WE HAVE A VERY VALUABLE RELATIONSHIP WITH MANER COSTERISAN AND VALUE THEIR TEAM. IN ADDITION TO THE INTERNAL EFFICIENCIES AND CONTROLS WE'VE GAINED, ONE OF THE BEST BENEFITS IS THE INNOVATION AND TRANSPARENCY WE CAN PROVIDE OUR SCHOOLS AND STAKEHOLDERS. IT SETS US APART FROM OTHER MANAGEMENT COMPANIES AND HELPS OUR SCHOOLS STAND OUT AS WELL. WE'RE ABLE TO INSTILL AN EVEN HIGHER LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE AND TRUST THAN WE COULD BEFORE.

**-LAURA CARPENTER, DIRECTOR OF BUDGET AND ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT  
CS PARTNERS**

The Maner team had a few months to implement the solution and ensure a successful go live by July 1st. They worked with CS Partners budget constraints and trained staff to help create 23 different companies in the solution. Maner configured Dynamics GP with a new chart of accounts that complied with the state's requirements, integrated ReQlogic to automate school purchase requisitions and payables, and set up a custom SharePoint portal so each school could login to view their financial statements and reports.

## **A+ BENEFITS FOR CS PARTNERS AND THEIR SCHOOLS**

### **STANDARDIZED, COMPLIANT CHART OF ACCOUNTS**

Because QuickBooks requires a separate database for every school, their chart of accounts formatting was inconsistent and hard to work with. With Dynamics GP, CS Partners has completely standardized their accounting and chart of accounts. "Every school finally looks the same and we don't have the risk of people putting things in that don't follow the format," says Laura.

### **TRANSPARENCY ACROSS THE BOARD**

With the new SharePoint portal, school leaders can securely log in and view real-time financial statements and reports at any time, from any device. "This was extremely important for us. We've always wanted our schools to be able to see what they have committed to spending, not just a report showing what they have already spent," explains Laura. "Our school boards also have access to view their monthly reports in SharePoint any time they want."

### **AUTOMATED PURCHASING AND PAYABLES**

Instead of manually approving and mailing hard copies of POs and invoices, schools can now simply scan them into ReQlogic. An email instantly notifies school leaders an approval is needed with a link to the invoice, which they can approve from any device. Invoices are imported directly into GP. This improvement has saved about 5 days in the invoice to payable process for each invoice, not to mention drastically reducing paper usage and time searching for documents.

### **IMPROVED INTERNAL CONTROLS**

The level of control CS Partners can provide the school boards is much better. They have greatly reduced the risk of error and fraud with a dual-authorization process for payables and replacing the signature stamp with electronic signatures.

### **50% LESS TIME SPENT ON REPORTING**

End-of-year reporting for the state used to take staff 10 hours (times 19 schools) and now takes less than 5. Equally important, school leaders and board members can access reports at any time through the SharePoint portal on their own, saving both parties time.

### **IMMEASURABLE EFFICIENCIES**

Laura cites numerous efficiencies that can't be measured, but have greatly improved productivity and their ability to serve schools faster and easier than before. She takes advantage of Maner Costerisan's user conferences and sessions to learn even more ways to optimize efficiencies within their software.

"We have a very valuable relationship with Maner Costerisan and value their team. In addition to the internal efficiencies and controls we've gained, one of the best benefits is the innovation and transparency we can provide our schools and stakeholders. It sets us apart from other management companies and helps our schools stand out as well. We're able to instill an even higher level of confidence and trust than we could before," Laura reports.