TDS®

Tempus Resource Case Study

Challenge

Telephone and Data Systems (TDS) is a Fortune® 1,000 company that provides wireless products and services, cable and wireline broadband, TV and voice services, and hosted and managed services to approximately six million customers nationwide through its businesses: UScellular, TDS Telecom, OneNeck IT Solutions, and Suttle-Straus. The company's mission is to provide outstanding communication services to its customers and meet the needs of the shareholders, people, and communities. The family of companies share a strong commitment to customer satisfaction and its customers by offering the highest-quality services and products and excellent customer support.

Before purchasing Tempus, TDS's IT leadership was overseeing its Resource Management through Excel spreadsheets. It was a very manual and time-consuming process that left the door open for errors and inaccuracies. There were teams and resources throughout the TDS IT organization that were constrained with project work, "keep the lights on" activities, and leadership felt they had no great system to manage that workload. This void made it critical for their team to identify a new method to ensure that they were effectively and efficiently tracking resources, allocating their time correctly, and not overwhelming staff with too much work. Most importantly, the team recognized they needed to ensure they were conducting their Resource Management effectively, with on-time project delivery and meeting the needs of the business.

Daniel Neugart, IT Portfolio Resource Analyst with TDS, explained the need to move to a platform that focuses solely on advanced Resource Management. After experiencing the team using Excel for resource planning, "I think using Excel was a critical step for us to take because it gave us a greater appreciation for what a tool like Tempus can offer. We had to go through a learning curve of what we think we need for Resource Management. We initially thought we would use Excel, and that step would help us reaffirm to ourselves that there might be a better way to do resource planning. We went out and did a little bit of shopping around. We landed on Tempus."

Solution

Tempus Resource by ProSymmetry is a purpose-built, resource portfolio management solution providing many Fortune 1,000 companies with resource forecasting and capacity planning solutions to help make strategic decisions for their businesses. With capabilities including bulk resource forecasting, skills and talent management, portfolio and resource capacity reporting and interactive scenario planning and What-If analysis, Tempus gives organizations actionable intelligence, cutting-edge analytics, and real-time scenario analysis.

TDS's IT team implemented Tempus to help with project planning and resource allocations for upcoming work. Dan Neugart continues, "Tempus helps us plan out upcoming activities as well as keep track of

existing work. We ask our PMs (Project Managers) to go into Tempus on a regular basis. If the project is set to end in six months and you are three months into that project, it allows us to, as best as we can, plan real-time on the amount of remaining work needed. Using Excel, as you might imagine, was very 'painful' to do that. With Tempus, PMs can log into Tempus, immediately find their project, update allocations, and we can plan better. Tempus is a credit to that."

Benefit

TDS's IT leadership has gained much insight into its resource forecasting and capacity planning with Tempus. The team utilizes Tempus's What-If scenario planning to allow Resource Analysts to run scenarios and plan more effectively. The tool provides options and answers about the ways forward and uncovers opportunities within possible disruptions. Being able to answer questions such as what happens to a project if a skilled resource is reassigned, or if budget constraints mean a project might be delayed, provides much more potential for success. What-If analysis is also valuable to test hypothetical scenarios, so companies don't have to commit the time, money, and resources up front.

Gary Hallmark, TDS's IT Portfolio Resource Analyst, described the benefit of Tempus's What-If modeling. "What really stands out for me is the Tempus What-If feature. It displays a view both at the team and individual resource level, which provides a great deal of insight into how utilized or underutilized a team or an individual resource is. We also use a color scheme of green, yellow and red. Green indicates that the resource or team is available to take on work. Yellow indicates that resources may have some availability but be cautious before proceeding. If a team or a resource is red, that indicates to us that they're overallocated and not available for new work or projects. I would say that feature really is critical in our decision-making process when we're trying to determine if we can take on new work, and if so, what resources are available to staff that project. We are also able to manipulate project work in real-time with the What-If tool. For example, adjusting a project timeline, changing the resources on a project, and seeing in real-time what that impact could have either on an individual team or individual resources."

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tradeoffs when considering various projects. By using What-If models in Tempus, TDS's team is provided with heat maps that help them better understand how new or proposed work will impact the existing projects. Tempus provides a visual representation with its color scheme to see proposed changes. "If we get a request from the business that's rather high in priority, more of a 'drop everything and start,' Tempus allows us to get that project in and then we can use the What-If tool to understand quickly what we must give up or stop to do this new work. That has been very eye-opening for us."

Nicole Ballweg, Manager of the Project Management Office, explains, "Another component that Tempus has given us is the ability to plan forward. We plan our portfolio for next year more than six months in advance and Tempus has given us the ability to do that. I've seen a lot of spreadsheets that get out of sync with each other. Tempus has given us the ability to not only have one model of what next year could look like, but ten depending on different variables that could be out there. It's been really flexible in that way."

Results

Since the switch from Excel to Tempus, TDS's IT leadership has seen opportunities and better resource utilization. Gary Hallmark describes, "What has been eye-opening to me is the discovery of how constrained some of our teams and individual resources were and the opportunities that Tempus has allowed us to identify and better plan when it comes to utilization of our resources. We're now able to paint a much clearer and more accurate picture of our project portfolio, both active work and incoming work, and communicate that information to our stakeholders where we are spending our time and where our priorities are."

Dan Neugart continues about the switch to Tempus, adding that "We (Resource Analysts) are now more focused on analysis and recommendation rather than data entry. If we get a request from one of our Service Owners, we can turn that around quickly using Tempus, versus the days and weeks we'd spend crunching through Excel to help us get that recommendation. That's been a big benefit regarding the amount of time that we're now able to spend on analysis and recommendations versus data entry."

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The data that TDS IT can gather from Tempus helps them with leadership discussions and working with other departments and business units. Gary Hallmark explains, "The reporting data and content that we have access to is used when working with our business unit partners and can also factor into some of the prioritization conversations that are had at the leadership level. If we have two competing projects, Tempus helps us decide which one we going to prioritize over the other."

Tempus's scalable API enables seamless integration with other platforms so users can pull data into or push data out of Tempus for further use and analysis. Dan Neugart continues, "We find a lot of benefit using the Exporter within Tempus that allows us to connect to our Business Intelligence platform. Our Service Owners work with their business unit counterparts and paint a picture for them. Here are the projects that we have upcoming. Here's the work we're doing for you today. We can give our stakeholders much better information on what our workload is like to continue to foster that relationship. We have gained a lot of benefit around that."

The TDS IT team has also had a positive experience with the ProSymmetry Customer Experience Teams. Gary Hallmark says the benefits include, "responsiveness, helpfulness, and their ability to be there and the willingness to help problem-solve. Any interaction that we've had has been positive. I have had the opportunity to work with many vendors before, and I would say this is the most positive vendor relationship that I've ever experienced."

Dan Neugart enjoys the mutual relationship ProSymmetry takes with its customers. He describes, "I wanted to bring some process improvements to the forefront, and it's a result of that relationship with ProSymmetry that allows us to deliver on them." Tempus created customized emails to alert management when a resource is needed on their team for a project. This enables streamlined communications tasks, rather than reaching out individually or stopping by people's offices to obtain such information.

TDS's IT leadership has benefitted from ProSymmetry's customer focus when implementing upgrades. Dan Neugart says, "Upgrades within Tempus continue to go very smoothly. They are very willing to schedule on our terms. We have a development environment where we can test out the upgrade and work out the best way to launch updates in our production environment. Flexibility would be the key," for the TDS team benefitting from its relationship with ProSymmetry.

When it has come to the contract process, Nicole Ballweg adds about the positive experience that TDS has had with ProSymmetry. "Their responsiveness could not be better, and they are very easy to work with. Quick to respond, but with a solid response. It's been a great company to work with. We really appreciate everything we've gotten from the ProSymmetry team."