



Polaris



Plains Midstream Canada

Improves Efficiency with Value-added Project Time Tracking



Customer:

Plains Midstream Canada
www.plainsmidstream.com

Industry: Energy

Headquarters:

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Use Case:

Project Costing and Absence Management

Challenges

- Running reports took hours
- It was difficult to keep track of deadlines, expenses, employee hours and absences
- Needed a better way to streamline project workflow
- Lacked visibility into project costs
- Had errors in timesheets and invoices

Plains Midstream Canada ULC (Plains) is focused on midstream activities, the wide range of transportation, storage, processing and marketing solutions for crude oil, natural gas and NGL. The company links petroleum producers with refiners and other customers via pipeline, truck and rail transportation. Its success is based on the ability to solve logistical challenges, deliver value-added services and provide the energy product solutions customers need. Plains Midstream does business in more than 45 U.S. states and eight Canadian provinces, and has over 1,250 employees.

High Demand for Organization-wide Time Tracking

Plains Midstream has grown through more than 35 acquisitions since 2001. This has resulted in an increase in projects, employees and consultants. The added complexity made it difficult to keep track of deadlines and costs, not to mention employee hours and absences. The increased pressure was felt most in departments like Information Systems (IS), Engineering and Supply Chain.

“With more and more projects coming in, we realized we needed a better way of streamlining project workflow,” said Val D, Administrative Support in IS. Val D said they were having a hard time keeping track of expenses and staying within budgets. Reporting was slow and they lacked visibility into all project costs.

The company was using Dynamics AX to try to filter out each department’s costs and run reports, but the process was time-consuming, challenging and not very user-friendly. Janelle Rue, a Project Administrator in the Project Management Office (PMO) — a part of IS — looks after the tracking of financials for various project managers. “With bigger and bigger projects and more and more contractors, it became a struggle to track invoices, budgets and who was working on what,” she said.

“We also needed a more optimal way to track vacation, sick days, flex days and other time off,” added Val D. “People would send in time-off requests, but if they wanted to cancel or change something, we couldn’t see if they actually

Results

- Generates reports 80 percent faster each month
- Improves speed and accuracy of time tracking and workflow processes
- Simplifies verification and approval of timesheets for staff and contractors in 95 percent less time
- Provides insight into project progress, costs and resources in real time
- Eliminates inaccuracies in timesheets and invoices
- Increases productivity with anytime, anywhere access

took off the time originally entered.” This was problematic, because they needed better visibility to schedule coverage for when someone was out sick or on vacation.

Errors were creeping into both timesheets and invoices. It took significant manual investigative work to sort through all of the paper trails and emails to determine where the problems occurred and how to rectify them.

The Right Solutions Make All the Difference

Multiple departments are now using Polaris to record employee hours and absences, and then manually export the data for HR. “The Polaris TimeCost and TimeOff solutions have really made a world of difference,” said Val D. “The solutions are configurable enough that different departments can use them for different uses. New IS employees are given a Polaris account right away, and it is mandatory to submit a timesheet every week. Contractors also use Polaris to track their time so we can make sure they accurately charge for time worked. Before Polaris, we would be way off on tracking costs and expenses for people’s time.”

Polaris also changed the way time is tracked in the PMO. There is employee crossover throughout different projects, which needs to be tracked properly so that time is allotted to the right budget. Rue said there are multiple users out in the field who use the Polaris application for internal IT projects and field projects such as pipeline construction and maintenance.



“ Before Polaris it would take several hours to run reports on timesheets and filter by projects - now I can seamlessly run monthly reports in 80 per cent less time. ”

Val D, Administrative Support,
Information Systems Department

Increasing Accuracy, Visibility and Productivity

IS strives to continuously improve to be more efficient and innovative, and Polaris’ cloud-based solutions are helping the team do so. “Since we’ve implemented Polaris, project managers say that time tracking is so much more accurate, and it’s easier to verify and approve timesheets,” said Val D.

Staff can easily edit and make changes, which helps to stem errors, said Val D. Ensuring accuracy in tracking project costs has not only eliminated frustration, it has also increased productivity and saved man hours per project per month. Val D said they used to waste time emailing back and forth with Accounts Payable to reconcile inaccuracies.

Rue is seeing similar results by using Polaris to track labour time and understand what is happening on projects. “When we receive invoices from contractors, we match them up to the hours in Polaris to confirm that they worked the hours stated in the invoice. This was much harder to do using a manual system,” said Rue. Staff doesn’t have to struggle with invoicing anymore because the Polaris workflow and approval process is easier and takes 95 percent less time.

Polaris is also helping with reporting on projects and budgets. The Polaris interface provides realtime insight into progress, including how many hours have been logged per project. As many projects can extend over a long period of time, Plains' executives like to see these reports to track progress. With the application, Val D and Rue can provide them instantly and provide a wealth of knowledge.

"With Polaris, we can slice and dice data on our top ten projects and break down tasks between employees and contractors," said Rue.

"We now have visibility on who is working on which projects, and we can make sure everyone is properly resourced. We weren't able to report on all of that before Polaris."

The ease of reporting has also cut down on the time it takes Val D to get work done.

"Before Polaris it would take several hours to run reports on timesheets and filter by projects - now I can run monthly reports in 80 percent less time. It takes just 20 minutes instead of a couple hours," said Val D.

Modern Solution for On-the-go Workforce

"Polaris is so intuitive and straightforward that we didn't need any training. Everyone really likes that they can log in from a browser on their laptop or mobile phone, whether they're at home, in the office or in the field," said Val D. "That anytime, anywhere access is very important."

"I can't imagine going back to the time before Polaris," said Val D. "If everything were manual again, it would be challenging when it came to accruals and estimating costs, and tracking holiday time, sick time, flex days and so on. We're happy with Polaris, and considering implementing Polaris Resource Management within the next year to optimize our workforce even more."



About Polaris

Polaris, the world's first Self-driving PSA, has created a new category for Professional Services Automation. For the first time, leaders get intelligent help with decision making as Polaris does the heavy lifting, analyzes real-time data, and delivers live recommendations on the best possible choices for them to decide from. Polaris is created by the team at Replicon, the Time Intelligence company, with over 25 years of industry leadership in enterprise time tracking. Replicon supports thousands of customers across 70 countries, including PwC, SAS, NTT, NSC Global, Omnicom, and Aon.

To learn more, visit www.polarispsa.com

Want to try it for your business?

Watch a live demo now. Free one-on-one support is available throughout the trial:

www.polarispsa/live-demo

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