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Delivering Improved Customer Service with a Streamlined Audit Process

Hungerford Vinton, LLC, a mid-sized auditing firm, wanted to deliver improved customer service to its clients by reducing the time spent preparing audit data.

This firm provides its clients with timely and reliable strategic auditing and consulting services. The company has recovered millions of dollars for its clients and has vastly improved clients' overall business efficiency and effectiveness.

More Efficient Audits = a Win-Win for Audit Firm and its Clients

It may be a worn cliché, but now more than ever, time is money. And for an external audit firm working on billable hours, gaining more efficiency means fewer unbillable hours. Fewer unbillable hours results in increased revenues for the firm.

But Hungerford Vinton's vision went far beyond simply increasing its profits. They wanted internal efficiencies to have a positive impact on their clients.

However, the audit firm faced a roadblock common to all external audit firms: the data received from clients was difficult to work with, existed in a myriad of formats and was generated by many types of accounting and financial packages. The end result: more time—often unbillable time—spent on extracting and analyzing the data needed for the actual audit.

The Solution for Streamlined Audit Data Preparation

"Clients don't think twice (and they shouldn't) about sending data in PDFs, or other formats that are difficult to analyze," says, Tim Hungerford, president, Hungerford Vinton, LLC. "But it's simply not feasible to have all our auditors learn the intricacies and quirks of multiple systems. Our clients send us audit data from a range of software solutions such as AS 400, QuickBooks, Peachtree, Sage MAS 90, Oracle Financials and more."

Add to that the need to access and extract data from historical records and legacy systems (prevalent in government systems, a specialty of this firm) and to combine data from multiple companies for a single audit. Since each client audit is unique, these factors combined make audit data prep a nearly insurmountable challenge.

During any audit, there is a lot of data gathering and subsequent conversion. Hungerford Vinton wanted to significantly reduce the hours spent, which could sometimes be as much as 15 hours per audit. Some of that prep time could not be billed back to the clients.

The firm realized Datawatch Monarch solved the data conversion problem, and more. Not only could the Datawatch data preparation solution quickly and easily extract specific data from clients' PDFs, flat files and application-generated reports, but it also could enable manipulating the same data for multiple views. Multiple views means the auditors could perform more comprehensive audits.

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CHALLENGE

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SOLUTION

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The Datawatch Platform enabled Hungerford Vinton to identify fraud in a matter of hours. Then, they escalated the matter to management to initiate corrective measures, which in turn saved its client thousands of dollars.



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Identifying Fraud

Hungerford Vinton performs different types of audits for its clients, including T&E audits, audits of governmental systems and recovery audits. Here's a great example of how Monarch helped the auditors save one of their clients money.

One of the firm's auditing teams was performing a T&E audit for this client. After running the salient reports through Datawatch Monarch and exporting that data into Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access, the auditors were able to dig in to the data.

What the data revealed was an anomaly in an expense report. One of the client's employees submitted an expense report with a very large restaurant bill. At first glance, the amount spent could be attributed to hosting several clients to an expensive dinner. But one single line item triggered a deeper dive into the data. There was a \$500 tip on the bill. The auditors looked at this and applied some common sense to the issue: most restaurants incorporate the tip into the final bill when there are more than six people in the party. After investigating the issue, the auditors confirmed it was

fraud on the part of the employee. He was pocketing the \$500 "tip." This issue then resulted in a larger investigation into additional fraud by that employee.

"The Datawatch Platform enabled us to identify and escalate fraud in a matter of hours, not days," adds Hungerford. "As a result, we were able to look deeper into the employee's behavior and ultimately saved the client thousands of dollars."

The Real Value of Data Preparation

"Our clients range from 'mom and pop' shops to Fortune 500 businesses," says Hungerford. "It would take untold hours and resources for us to learn the systems and data formats used by our clients. Instead, we can just run that data through Datawatch Monarch and have the data we need in just minutes, which delivers rapid results for our clients."

That time savings means more strategic analysis, leading to more findings, which helps the audit firm deliver outstanding service to its clients. This reputation for excellent service and strategic counsel results in greater client retention and increased new business opportunities.

The benefit of data preparation goes beyond saving clients money. The audit firm has standardized on the Datawatch Platform, allowing all its auditors to use repeatable processes and report models to easily and effectively transform audit data. This standardization not only ensures the quality and consistency of the firm's audits, but also makes it very easy for the audit teams to work with new clients.

"The 'before' and 'after' of our use of Datawatch Platform paints a striking picture," comments Hungerford. "Without Monarch, data prep for a single audit would take six to eight times longer."

With Datawatch Monarch, the audit firm reduced the time spent on audit data prep from 15 hours to as little as 2 minutes — a 99% time savings, which translates into thousands of dollars saved per audit.

The Datawatch data preparation solution provides more efficient data prep and standardized data analysis processes, which in turn deliver much greater insights into the data, delivering greater profitability for the audit firm and its clients.

KEY BENEFITS

- ↳ More efficient audits, as the entire audit process has been streamlined.
- ↳ Data gathering time significantly reduced.
- ↳ Audit prep time reduced by 15 hours per audit (on average).
- ↳ Audit firm was able to identify fraud in a matter of hours.

