



NEXTSTEP – The Transition To Success

A MAS 90® Accounting Solution

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Client Profile

The Red Rose Transit Authority provides comprehensive public transportation for the citizens of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. They receive federal, state, and local funding to maintain their \$8.87 million yearly operating budget. A county-wide network of 43 buses operates 365 days per year and carried over 2 million passengers last year. This transit system is supplemented by Access, a door-to-door van service for special needs individuals, and the Red Rose Trolley—available for charter.

Time For An Overhaul

For over a decade, an IBM mini-computer with a single terminal offered the only entry into Red Rose Transit Authority’s (RRTA) accounting software. In 1992, RRTA expanded operations to include their Access service. The new service offering necessitated a network to allow additional users entry into the system. It was time to replace the antiquated mini-computer in favor of a modern network and workstations. As a public authority, Red Rose Transit was required to send the project out for bids. Twenty workstations, a powerful new server, and updated accounting software went on that request.

Getting The Green Light

The bidders were several firms, including a large computer supplier and reseller of Macola, and NextStep Technology Advisors—resellers of the MAS 90 product line. Being a late recipient, an underdog in terms

of company size and with only a few days to prepare a bid, NextStep knew they needed to approach the bid creatively. NextStep requested a meeting with the decision makers and system users at RRTA to enable them to better understand the needs of the company and concerns of the staff. As a result of time spent at that meeting, RRTA was able to see that professionalism, responsiveness, and personal attention are the calling cards of NextStep, and NextStep was able to propose the precise system to meet RRTA’s needs. That meeting marked the beginning of a decade-old successful relationship. NextStep was awarded the contract. One of RRTA’s own buses was dispatched to carry the workstations and server across town to RRTA’s offices.



While some of Red Rose Transit’s equipment is turn-of-the-century, its accounting software is state-of-the-art

The implementation went very smoothly. One module at a time was brought on-line, as the staff worked to enter data from the mini-computer into the subsequent modules. NextStep’s conscientious and careful handling of the conversion impressed Pat Michel, RRTA’s CFO, “Our consultant worked with us on Saturdays to bring it all together.” Specific reporting guidelines from RRTA’s directors necessitated the creation of custom reports. “NextStep’s consultants are truly gurus of reports,” remarks Michel, “It would have taken me forever without their help.”

The Right Route

RRTA’s accounting needs are not complex, but certain

specific functionality must be present. MAS 90's General Ledger account structure suits the requirement to have three segments in order to differentiate account numbers by service. The continuity of reporting from year to year is vital. A very stringent set of federal guidelines had defined the appearance of their reports for years. NextStep was able to replicate those reports in MAS 90, providing the necessary consistency. As RRTA grows and adds new services, such as the Red Rose Trolley—NextStep creates new reports and custom financial statements to reflect the changes. "I can't say enough about their service," Michel commends.

The ability to print a detailed general ledger report for any account number for any time period has proven especially valuable to RRTA. During their annual audit, they are able to print these types of reports to easily track the activity surrounding a federal grant, or another funding source. "I didn't realize how valuable that single feature would be," says Michel. The capability to produce comprehensive, informative reports instantly saves RRTA a substantial amount of money on their annual audit bill. "We are able to produce many of the required reports ahead of time for the auditor," says Michel, "And during the audit, if a specific piece of information is needed, we are able to produce it on the spot, without paying the auditor to research it."

The General Ledger Analysis Report offers a summarized Income Statement and Balance Sheet reflecting the current period, prior period, and year-to-date, along with the percentage of change from the prior period and prior year-to-date. In addition, this report includes a list of 13 important financial ratios which provide RRTA's management with a quick recap of the company's financial condition.



Like Red Rose's door-to-door service, NextStep provides its clients with a high level of service for their information technology needs

A separate specialized transit-management software tracks the maintenance and repair of the buses, but all accounting transactions related to the operation, such as repairs and equipment purchases are driven through MAS 90's Accounts Payable module. Clear, concise payables reporting helps RRTA manage corporate expenditures and take full advantage of early payment discounts.

The MAS 90 Payroll module processes pay checks and direct deposit transactions for RRTA's 100 employees without a hitch; all necessary state and federal reporting is easily produced.

To further extend the benefits MAS 90 provides RRTA beyond the software's standard features, NextStep used Microsoft Access to develop a pension plan tracking database. The system dynamically reads and summarizes MAS 90 payroll data and generates quarterly management reports as well as slips that are distributed to employees. It has been saving RRTA hours of manual labor and eliminating any chance of data-entry errors.

No Unscheduled Stops

Oddly enough, Michel says, her biggest compliment about NextStep is how little she needs to see them. "We really haven't had any issues," she says, "And if I ever have questions, they're either right out here, or they walk us through a solution over the phone. With NextStep, it's all about their service."

NextStep publishes quarterly newsletters and offers frequent user group meetings that Michel and her staff greatly appreciate. New features, usage tips, and year-end procedures are among the topics covered in these forums. "On-going training in the computer system is not part of our budget, so this information is invaluable to us," explains Michel.

Red Rose Transit Authority, MAS 90, and NextStep Technology Advisors—*skillfully navigating the road of success.*

Headquartered in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, our firm has specialized in MAS 90 and MAS 200 by Best Software since 1989.

Our extensive experience, exceptional service, and broad expertise assure you of our ability to solve even the toughest business problems.

If you would like to fine-tune your firm's approach to accounting, we would like to talk with you and see if MAS 90 is the right solution for you.



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