



Small and Midmarket Solutions & Partners



## Leading Market Research Company Standardizes Accounting and Project Management

### Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Market Research

Company Size:

US: 800 Employees

UK, Europe & Asia-Pacific: 900

Employees

### Key Results:

- Immediate savings of U.S.\$400,000 due to elimination of redundant work
- Reduction in invoice processing time from between 9 and 11 days to 2 days
- Month-end closing in 3 days rather than 60 to 90 days
- Cash flow increase of \$700,000 due to accelerated time reporting and invoice processing

“The applications that we use now allow us to work smarter — not harder — and make real-time decisions leveraging live data.”

Steven Barnstable, Vice President and Director of Financial Systems, NOP World

After acquiring some of the best market research firms in the United States, NOP World was strategically positioned to offer industry-specific expertise, people knowledge, and total client support across marketing cycles. In uniting diverse companies, the company needed to standardize all offices on one accounting and project management solution to streamline work practices and improve communication channels. NOP World worked with NexVue Information Systems, a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner, to implement the Microsoft Business Solutions–Solomon solution to address the market research company’s needs, resulting in an immediate savings of U.S.\$400,000.

Customer Summary	Business Needs	Business Impact	Technology Solutions
With U.S. headquarters in New York, New York, NOP World is a leading market research company. Its research team and consultant staff of 800 employees deliver industry-specific expertise and help customers build winning strategies and market leadership.	NOP World faced communication challenges due to recent company acquisitions and lack of a central location for data. Problems also stemmed from inaccuracies and inefficiencies within accounting departments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creation of standard procedures through use of one solution</li> <li>▪ Significant savings due to reduction of redundant work</li> <li>▪ Improved project management process and reduction in accounting discrepancies</li> </ul>	NOP World worked with NexVue to implement Microsoft® Business Solution–Solomon and used Visual Basic® 6.0 with SQL Server™ 7.0 to develop the Electronic Project Reporting System (ePRS), a customized application integrated with Microsoft Solomon.

“Time and effort saved are almost limitless. The ability for project directors who manage 250 projects a month to look at all projects in totality and conduct reporting on demand is priceless.”

Steven Barnstable, Vice President and Director of Financial Systems, NOP World

## Business Needs

Early in 2004, NOP World brought together US and European research leaders, including Allison-Fisher, Marke Measures/Cozint, Mediamark Research Inc., NOP Automotive, NOP Healthcare, NOP Research Group, RoperASW, RoperNOP Consulting, Strategic Marketing Corporation, and Eurisko. With this amount of growth, a company experiences some growing pains. In the US, NOP World initiated a plan to ease the process. NOP World realized that the new business units were not communicating effectively and were relying on different accounting and project management systems. To minimize redundancies and improve communication, the company needed a robust solution that could be rolled out companywide.

In addition, NOP World saw an opportunity to improve strategic planning and forecasting of projects. One business unit already was using Microsoft® Business Solutions–Solomon prior to acquisition by NOP World. Based on that business unit’s successful experience with the solution and the process improvement possibilities, NOP World decided to roll out Microsoft Solomon to all U.S. business units. NexVue Information Systems, a Microsoft Certified Partner, had worked on the initial implementation and was brought in for the additional rollout.

## Business Impact

### Improving Communication

Through the implementation of Microsoft Business Solutions, NOP World has been able to drastically improve communication channels throughout the company. In addition, NOP World used Microsoft Visual Basic® development system version 6.0 with Microsoft SQL Server™ version 7.0 to develop the Electronic Project Reporting System (ePRS), a customized database that is fully integrated with Microsoft Solomon. ePRS has two modules: the Proposal Module and the Study Initiation Process (SIP) Module. Both have aided in streamlining communication and improving data accuracy and reporting across the company.

Prior to rollout of the ePRS Proposal Module, each office tracked and budgeted projects differently. Now, a centralized repository complete with a pricing model section is used for all projects, and that improves consistency and ultimately profitability. In addition, through the deployment of a finance Web report server, employees can easily access—in real-time—all project and proposal financial-related data. With the Proposal Module, NOP World can capture pricing and project attribute details for multiple projects and budgets. Much of this data is used in the forecasting process.

In addition, the Study Initiation Process Module automatically populates and schedules revenue and invoice data for a project in standard templates. Once budgets have been approved by the finance department, the SIP Module updates 17 tables within Microsoft Solomon; automatically populates project basics, details (flags and tags), budget, and scheduled revenues; and automatically creates the drafts of the invoices.

The two modules have greatly aided in capturing and centralizing much of the financial data that the company uses daily. “The applications that we use now allow us to work smarter—not harder—and make real-time decisions leveraging live data, which is of significant value to everyone,” says Steven Barnstable, Vice President and Director of Financial Systems at NOP World.

### Increasing Efficiencies

NOP World has made great strides in increasing internal efficiencies through the implementation of Microsoft Business Solutions and ePRS. One of the most significant improvements is the elimination of redundant work and data entry. Previously, timecards caused problems for employees and the accounting department. Employees filled out paper timecards and then forwarded them to the accounting department, which was responsible for data entry of the information. Many times timecards were late and no approval process was followed.

Now, using the Microsoft Solomon desktop client, all employees are responsible for entering their own time,

## Software and Services

- Microsoft Business Solutions–Solomon
- Microsoft SQL Server 7.0
- Microsoft Visual Basic 6.0

## Partner

- NexVue Information Systems



and accountants no longer need to do the data entry. In addition, mistakes and discrepancies with time have been drastically reduced. NOP World has realized a U.S.\$400,000 savings by the efficient realignment of seven accounting staff employees. The ability to better collect, manage, and control billable-time data has accelerated the invoicing process and created a \$700,000 increase in cash flow. Finally, a new process ensures that all time entries are approved by managers before they go to accounting for payment. Compliance with the timekeeping procedure has increased from between 60 and 70 percent to 90 percent.

Invoice generation also has been improved. Previously, the invoice process involved multiple faxes (up to 70 per day), follow-up by phone to ensure accuracy, and then creation of the final invoice. If there were invoicing errors, corrections were made and the process repeated. This was very time consuming and left room for multiple errors. An average invoicing process took between 9 and 11 days. With Microsoft Solomon and ePRS, the process is reduced to 2 days because all time and billing data has been previously entered and approved within the solution. Invoices are generated directly from the program without the use of faxes and paper timecards. Month-end closing, which previously took 60 to 90 days, now is complete in 3 days.

Finally, having centralized information allows for standardization of the project management process. All office access the same data and reports, which has improved overall efficiency in project management. "Time and effort saved are almost limitless," says Barnstable. "The ability for project directors who manage 150 projects a month to look at all projects in totality and conduct reporting on demand is priceless."

### Streamlining Project Planning

Another custom application developed to work with Microsoft Solomon that NOP World is finding beneficial is the Schedule Revenue Module, which allows the company to schedule revenue many years in advance. Because ePRS is integrated with Microsoft Solomon, data is automatically populated in the Schedule Revenue Module. This feature allows for more accurate project forecasting and revenue projections. In the past, accountants would have to set up project budgets by manually entering data. Now, all financial data is populated automatically after budget approval, and an exercise that used to take 30 minutes is complete with one mouse click.

### Technology Solution

Working with NexVue, NOP World implemented Microsoft Business Solution–Solomon to address accounting and project needs. In conjunction with Microsoft Solomon, the company developed a custom application using Visual Basic 6.0 with the SQL Server 7.0 database. This custom application, the Electronic Project Reporting System, provides the project management tools that the company needed. By working together, ePRS and Microsoft Solomon provide a central database for project tracking, budgeting, invoicing, forecasting, reporting, and timekeeping. By the end of 2004, all U.S. subsidiaries of NOP World will use this solution, and that will continue communication and process improvements. In 2005, NOP World plans to switch its European offices to the same solution.

## For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com).

For more information about NexVue Information Systems products and services, call (203) 327-0800 or visit the Web site at [www.nexvue.com](http://www.nexvue.com).

For more information about NOP World products and services, call (212) 240-5300 or visit the Web site at [www.nopworld.com](http://www.nopworld.com).

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