CIVICA

Hamilton City Council expanding Authority
across the business to reach its goals

Hamilton City Council
Te kaunihera o Kirikiriroa

Hampered by two disparate financial systems, Hamilton City Council went in search of the perfect solution to deliver an integrated, single source of truth for all its financial transactions. During this process, it discovered Civica's Authority had much more to offer including a range of operational transformational opportunities that would enhance the delivery of civic services.

Hamilton City Council delivers municipal services to the New Zealand's fourth largest city. Situated on the banks of the North Island's Waikato River, Hamilton has a population of around 170,000 residents, generates annual revenues of over NZ$300 million and covers an area in excess of 110 km².

When David Bryant, General Manager – Corporate, joined Hamilton City Council four years ago, there was no established roadmap within the business on how to best transition from its two separate financial systems to one simple and efficient financial system. As a senior leader supporting many of the City's services, Mr Bryant was acutely aware of the opportunity such a system transformation would provide to its community, especially in providing enhanced services online.

Outcomes

▶ **Single source of truth for all transactional and financial data**

▶ **Ability to extract strategic business intelligence**

▶ **Savings through deeper understanding of fiscal management**

▶ **End-to end financial transparency**

▶ **Streamlined reporting**

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David Bryant
General Manger - Corporate

"When I arrived, we were only using the Rates and Regulatory modules of the Authority suite," Mr Bryant said. "Our accounting system was sourced from another vendor.

"This was not where we wanted to be, and we knew we could deliver better community outcomes if we addressed this issue. We saw a huge upside for Council if we transitioned to one financial system that not only provided a single source of truth (SSOT) but would also provide us with a digital platform to drive additional benefits to the community."

Once the decision was made to move to a SSOT model and transition away from the incumbent system, the suitability of Authority's accounting module as its successor came under intense scrutiny from across the business.

"At the beginning of our selection process we did our due diligence in making sure Authority could handle the demands of a council of Hamilton's size," Mr Bryant said. "We were excited by the functionality of the latest version of Authority and how the product did not need a lot of customisation."

Hamilton City Council's confidence in Authority's ability to drive positive business outcomes grew even more after meeting with Civica's executive team prior to embarking on this implementation.

"Their level of commitment to our project, Authority and the local government sector in general extended well beyond our expectations," Mr Bryant said.

Implementation

After unanimously deciding to implement Authority's accounting module, council handed responsibility for the project over to Tracey Musty, Hamilton City Council's financial controller. Ms Musty put together a crack project team consisting of cross-functional stakeholders from all operational teams across the council.

A program manager was employed who then developed an extensive plan to deploy the new, integrated financial system including the training of super-users and the implementation of a comprehensive change management program.

"To create an expert project team, we did what every key project should do, we extracted key people from their business roles and sponsored them onto the project while back filling their positions," Mr Bryant said.

"For us this was the only way to guarantee we would achieve the enterprise-wide transformational outcomes we were looking for."

"This was no longer just a financial implementation but a broad business process re-engineering project. Post implementation, we needed those team members to return to their departments championing the new system and driving the efficiencies created through the new simplified processes."

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Benefits

Benefits from Hamilton City Council's recent business transformation have been many and varied. They include cost efficiencies, productivity improvements, unprecedented capabilities to measure, report and analyse data.

"Our biggest benefit is our newfound confidence in the system," Mr Bryant said. "Having a single source of truth for our administrative and transactional data means we are able to look deeper into our fiscal management and gain a better understanding of where we can make savings."

"It is important for us to understand and be accountable for all council revenues and expenses because we are ultimately responsible to the rate payers. We need to be able to demonstrate complete transparency around council finances and know exactly how much of the rates we have allocated to different activities."

Another big win for Hamilton City Council manifested from the conversion of its chart of accounts which has transformed from something that was rigid and cumbersome to use into a highly flexible tool.

"We can now drill down deep into the data to extract strategic business intelligence through comprehensive

and customisable metrics, analysis and reporting," Mr Bryant said. "We can now access our reports straight out of the system instead of wasting time manually adapting information into spreadsheets.

"This saves a huge amount of time, reduces errors and makes it easier for us to obtain the information needed to make more informed decisions for the business."

User Group

Additional benefits for Hamilton City Council have been derived from attending the New Zealand Authority User Group which comprises of 15 councils that meet regularly to share knowledge and aggregate feedback to Civica with regards to any enhancements that they feel would benefit all councils.

"The old accounting software we used was serviced by a reseller which made it impossible to influence the strategic direction of the future product development," Mr Bryant said. "With the Authority user group, we not only have direct access to the developers of the software, but we find out how other councils are using the software and learn from each other's experiences."

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Executive buy-in

The partnership from the very start of the project between Hamilton City Council and Civica was exemplary, according to Mr Bryant. The teams worked in a collaborative manner and this approach produced a successful outcome for both entities.

"The executive partnership with Civica was outstanding," he said. "Each Friday at 3:00 pm, during the course of the implementation, I would be on a phone call with Civica's, Local Government Managing Director, Ben Cowling, Head of Sales Brett Barningham, and Professional Services Director, Lynn Harrison. We would be joined by our CIO and financial controller. The whole purpose of that weekly call was to discuss what was working and what was not. We would identify our immediate priorities and decide on what we need to do next."

"We were particulary impressed by Lynn Harrison and her team who did a fantastic job at making sure the project was always on-track. This type of commitment demonstrated how invested Civica was in the success of our project and went above and beyond the call of duty."

Future Authority projects

Hamilton City Council will be broadening the use of Authority across council operations with the addition of more modules in the future. It will be further consolidating aging systems with the end goal being the delivery of better services to their community.

"We want our people to invest their time driving improved outcomes for our community, not being hamstrung by inefficient complex systems and processes. Therefore, system consolidation is our focus," Mr Bryant said. "Our council wants to move away from bespoke systems and take a fully integrated approach to our digital transformation. What the Authority suite offers us is a variety of relevant modules that will help take our council services to the next level.

"We are especially looking forward to implementing Authority's community portal which will dramatically improve the way our community conducts business with us online, cutting out the middleman and allowing residents to directly conduct transactions through council's website.

Part of the Authority upgrade - due for completion in the next couple of months - includes installing scanner technology to significantly reduce manually entering documents.

"Invoices will be directly scanned into the system, providing an image of the source document, freeing up our data entry staff to take on more value- adding activities for the local community," Mr Bryant said. "That will create significant productivity benefits for us."

Conclusion

Creating a digital platform where Hamilton City Council can springboard other Authority modules to improve community experience is a key reason why Hamilton City Council is investing in Civica's Authority suite.

"We are going as fast as we can to adopt the Authority modules that make sense for us and provide benefit to our community," Mr Bryant said." We are looking forward to leveraging all the opportunities the Authority modules grant us."

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>
> **David Bryant**
> General Manger - Corporate