



## Performing-Arts Center Moves to the Cloud to Streamline Finance and Focus on Its Goals

“By using cloud-based Microsoft technologies, including Microsoft Dynamics GP, we generate substantial savings and efficiencies; practice transparent, sound financial management; and bring outstanding performing-arts events to growing numbers of patrons.”

Connie Silverman, Controller, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

**Customer:** Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

**Customer Website:**

[www.kauffmancenter.org](http://www.kauffmancenter.org)

**Customer Size:** 30 employees

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** Nonprofit organizations; Retail—Performing arts and spectator sports

**Partner:** NetStandard

**Partner Website:** [www.netstandard.com](http://www.netstandard.com)

**Customer Profile**

In its spectacular new building, the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts in Kansas City delivers extraordinary performing-arts experiences to the community, aiming to do so with optimal efficiency and financial accountability.

**Software and Services**

- Microsoft Dynamics
  - Microsoft Dynamics GP
  - Microsoft Dynamics Retail Management System
- Microsoft Office
  - Microsoft Outlook
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
  - Microsoft Exchange Server
  - Microsoft SharePoint Server

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### Business Needs

The [Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts](http://www.kauffmancenter.org) in Kansas City, Missouri, which opened its doors to the public in October 2011, aims to enrich the lives of communities by offering extraordinary performing-arts experiences. The Kauffman Center's new building quickly became iconic to its city and region and received praise for its dramatic, compelling design; excellent acoustics; and complete accessibility. A lean organization, consisting of 30 employees, manages the Kauffman Center's business operations, focusing on the core mission of facilitating performances. The Kauffman Center outsources such functions as ticket sales, food and beverage sales, janitorial services, and IT to qualified vendors.

For several years before the opening of the new facility, the Kauffman Center ran as a start-up with a small staff. For accounting, a hosted instance of Intuit QuickBooks provided appropriate functionality. However, as opening day approached, the business was about to become more complex. Connie Silverman, who as the Controller at the Kauffman Center is also responsible for human resources and IT, explains, “We wanted to be ready with a robust financial management solution that would let us record and manage revenue, perform proper depreciations, manage fixed assets, and work effectively within a complex fund-accounting structure. We also needed the reporting capabilities to ensure our compliance, in terms of proper payment of taxes, grant management,

bond financing, providing informational returns, and general transparency of our financial practices.”

Accessing the new financial management solution in the cloud continued to make best sense for the Kauffman Center's business model. Silverman and her colleagues reviewed possible solutions to replace their current financial software.

### Solution

The Kauffman Center connected with Microsoft partner [NetStandard](http://www.netstandard.com) and found a good match in a technology provider that was able to share the organization's goals and become a trusted partner in its outsourced business model. A hosted NetStandard solution called [MyAppsAnywhere](http://www.netstandard.com) offered almost all of the software functionality the Kauffman Center needed. In an incremental approach, the Kauffman Center started with Microsoft Exchange Server and added the other tools over time. In the case of Microsoft Dynamics GP, the Kauffman Center went live with the new software 18 months before the new facility opened, giving technology users ample time to test the solution in real-life business scenarios.

With the complete MyAppsAnywhere deployment, the Kauffman Center gained many important business-enabling capabilities:

- [Microsoft Dynamics GP](http://www.microsoft.com/dynamics/gp), an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, that the



Kauffman Center relies on for financial management functionality

- [Microsoft SharePoint Server](#) for file and content sharing, including announcements, policies and procedures, and the calendar of activities
- [Microsoft Exchange Server](#) and [Microsoft Outlook](#) for email communications and collaboration

Kauffman Center employees access the hosted solutions securely and from any location through their web browsers, without needing to go through a virtual private network. They can choose the devices that they prefer to access the solutions on, including tablet or laptop computers and smartphones.

By integrating Microsoft Dynamics GP with [Microsoft Dynamics Retail Management System](#), a point-of-sale system, the Kauffman Center can record payments for retail, catering, and concession sales by using handheld devices. The integrated system also connects to Tessitura Software, a specialized solution for customer relationship management, ticketing, and other business tasks in arts organizations. Financial detail from both Microsoft Dynamics Retail Management System and Tessitura Software resides in the database in Microsoft Dynamics GP, where it is available for financial processing and reporting. The implementation of Microsoft Dynamics GP complies with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

The Kauffman Center continues to work with NetStandard on technology-related projects. Currently, the technology partner is working on closer integration of the solution's components, consistent purchasing workflows, and more advanced reporting from Microsoft Dynamics GP.

## Benefits

With key business systems in the cloud, the Kauffman Center team can focus on its most important tasks. "Microsoft Dynamics GP and our other hosted Microsoft technologies are strong enablers of our business model," says Jane Chu, CEO of the Kauffman Center. "They help us effectively serve our patrons and the community, bringing more than 200 events to over 340,000 visitors throughout the year and providing them with a powerful performing-arts experience."

## Save \$600,000 in Three Years

By moving key business applications to the cloud and entrusting IT support to an expert team, the Kauffman Center generated enormous savings. Comparing the costs of owning and operating cloud-based solutions to that of implementing and supporting the software on-premises over a span of three years, the organization saved a little more than US\$600,000. "We perform annual reviews of the costs and benefits of the technologies we use," Silverman comments. "We might not always save as much as we do in our first three years, but Microsoft Dynamics GP and the other technologies in the cloud will continue to be financially advantageous. For one thing, we will never need to hire administrative and help-desk professionals to support our business infrastructure. Instead, we contract with accomplished experts who do this work for us with outstanding quality and optimal economy."

## Simplify Financial Management

The Kauffman Center achieved noticeable efficiency gains in its finance management. "With Microsoft Dynamics GP, it takes a few minutes to run all the profit-and-loss and other financial reports and produce financial statements at the end of the month," says Silverman. "Those tasks used to take a week-and-a-half."

The organization replaced many manual reporting tasks, performed in spreadsheets, with automated reporting that provides executives, auditors, and others with the information they need to see. The Kauffman Center's finance team also takes advantage of Microsoft Dynamics GP to perform such tasks as managing fixed assets efficiently. "Fixed-asset management is helping us quite a bit," notes Silverman. "Adding individual or bulk assets as groups or classes is a very straightforward task." She also has noticed a change in her own work. "With Microsoft Dynamics GP, I am more productive; I can quickly review accounts-receivable and accounts-payable entries in batches, instead of looking at each single entry," she remarks.

## Provide Transparency with Complete Data Integrity

Beyond controlling the organization's finances, the Kauffman Center relies on Microsoft Dynamics GP to comply with the reporting

needs associated with grants, taxes, bond financing, audits, and informational requests. Sharing sensitive information within the organization and with outside agencies also imposes stringent requirements for data integrity. Silverman comments, "By using Microsoft Dynamics GP, we have all the insight and reporting tools that we need to work effectively with outside organizations and give them insight into our financial status. We've also streamlined the effort of producing monthly, quarterly, and annual reports. What's more, the security features of our hosted Microsoft technologies are fantastic. We can easily set the proper controls so that only authorized persons can change certain records and confidential patron or donor information, such as credit card numbers, is safe from unwarranted viewing."

## Set Directions for the Future

In other projects, the Kauffman Center is working on implementing automated, consistent workflows for the origination, authorization, and management of purchase orders, automated budget reports, and executive dashboards with real-time financial information for executives. "We have already accomplished much and will continue to expand our use of Microsoft technologies," states Silverman. "I'm looking forward to taking financial management to the next level and meeting our next challenges while we bring more performances to a growing community of patrons."

A sustainability initiative underway at the Kauffman Center also benefits strongly from Microsoft Dynamics GP and hosted technologies. "By using Microsoft Dynamics GP, we can largely eliminate paper-based processes and documentation, which makes better environmental sense in addition to being more efficient," says Silverman. "For example, we are moving to completely electronic vendor management, including electronic invoicing. The cloud-based technology deployment also helps us avoid the environmental impact of having all servers and networking equipment onsite."