

### OUR CLIENT:

CITY GOVERNMENT OF WEST LINN, OREGON

### THE ISSUE:

MAINTAIN STRATEGIC THINKING OF A CTO POSITION AT LOWER COST



West Linn Library



Willamette Park, West Linn, Oregon

## CITY OF WEST LINN

WEST LINN, KNOWN AS THE CITY OF HILLS, TREES, AND RIVERS, CELEBRATED SOMETHING BESIDES ITS CENTENNIAL IN 2013. The city signed on with Polar Systems to improve information technology services with an estimated 17.5% annual savings — \$28,000 per year.

The City of West Linn consists of 12 departments, and it employs approximately 124 full-time employees. The city's Information Technology (IT) Department is chartered as a shared service to all of the city's departments. IT provides a broad range of services including strategic IT plan development, hardware and software acquisition, oversight of the city's many technology vendors, maintenance of systems, and network administration.

In addition, IT staff provides support to desktop computer users regarding hardware and many software applications. The IT Department maintains approximately 150 desktops, 70 laptops, 80 printers, and 120 third party applications. IT staff also manages the city's data storage, consisting of approximately 2 Terabytes of data. The City of West Linn IT Department is constantly striving to provide high quality service in creative and unique ways that allows for maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

**TOUGH ECONOMICS TIMES:** West Linn employed a Chief Technology Officer full-time rather than an IT director, with the understanding that a higher skill set would accompany the more expensive position. Tough economic times brought into question the long-term financial viability of the position. The city desired to maintain the strategic thinking that a CTO position delivered, but the expense of a full-time, in-house resource was no longer in the budget.

The City of West Linn senior management team was seeking a solution to their expense issue without compromising quality. Knowing the level of leadership they needed, city managers looked externally to find a public/private partnership that delivered the financial value. Polar Systems, from the beginning, had the right pedigree for the city and their needs.

"Polar Systems had originally engaged with the City of West Linn because they were looking for potential solutions to expand the city's library parking," said Tim Tragesser, President of Polar Systems. "Since Polar is next door, we were involved in the discussions regarding potential options. At the time, we had recently built out our Virtual Chief Information Officer (vCIO) business to provide more strategic support and technical leadership to our clients. In our interaction with the leadership team at the City of West Linn, we identified a need that we could satisfy with our vCIO services. It's been gratifying on many levels to be able to provide a service to the city where we're located and where many of Polar's employees live."

**KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:** The city was interested in not only containing cost for its IT department but also looking for IT thought leadership that was more service-focused. In early discussion phases, the senior management team made it clear that any service provider would need to meet these key performance indicators:

- Proven track record of independent budget and financial management
- Local support presence and minimum staffing levels
- Ability to integrate with existing West Linn staff and deliver upon their department visions

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In July 2012, the City of West Linn initiated a trial run to outsource its IT leadership to Polar Systems. Ten months later, after a competitive bid process, the City Council voted unanimously to approve signing a contract with Polar Systems for its vCIO services for the next two years. Polar Systems' responsiveness to the service announcement, demonstrated knowledge, skills, and abilities in the technology sector were key to the awarding of the contract. It also helped that Polar Systems was providing similar services to other local Portland-area cities.

**POLAR SYSTEMS vCIO SERVICES:** With Polar Systems' virtual CIO offering, a Polar Systems senior manager/vCIO works with the city to develop a portfolio of internal IT projects designed to streamline processes to reduce time, resources and/or cost, and external-focused projects aimed at providing better services to the residents of and visitors to West Linn. It is important to be able to solve problems and thoroughly understand city operations and grasp the big picture to balance needs versus cost and to bring the best solutions to light. Polar Systems' vCIOs do just that.

vCIO IT services for the City of West Linn include IT policy development and review, strategy management, budget management, vendor outsourcing and ongoing vendor management, contract negotiation and management, infrastructure service level agreement (SLA) and operational-level agreement (OLA) management, staff development and management, public citizen engagement, technology leadership, and department strategy leadership. In addition to fulfilling both day-to-day and long-term needs, the vCIO also provides IT representation at public and private forums, manages the city's technological resources, and establishes basic performance metrics.

**RESULTS TO DATE:** In the initial 12 months that Polar Systems has been providing vCIO services to the City of West Linn, the payback has been evident. Some highlights of the partnership are:

- Developed a comprehensive two-year IT budget including capital equipment improvements, recurring maintenance agreements, and department-level project requests, moving towards more predictable operating expenses.
- Managed 30 organization-wide IT projects within the constraints of the previous budget cycle and delivered a significant amount of technology change in the first year of engagement.
- Reduced the IT vendor pool, saving staff time on vendor performance management.
- Put processes in place with service vendors to ensure vendor performance meets agreed-upon expectations and standards.
- Renegotiated key telephony and video recording contracts plus terms on new hardware and software purchases to gain significant savings for the city.
- Developed IT department staff training and work plans to improve staff delivery capabilities and improve execution for underserved departments.

"We have seen noticeable, positive changes in our IT department," Assistant City Manager Kirsten Wyatt said, "most specifically, the role that a true chief information officer plays on our team. Right now we have a true member of our team, even if he's not technically a City of West Linn staff person."

Wyatt cited the ongoing police station project as an example of this. Where the city once assumed it would have to bring in outside consultants for the IT side of construction, Polar Systems and its vCIO services filled that role instead.

*Photo Credits: City of West Linn, Oregon*

#### *About Polar Systems*

*Polar Systems, Inc., founded in 1981, has built a reputation as one of the premier technology consulting providers in Oregon & SW Washington. The company's diverse client list includes many of the best-known companies and government agencies in the area. Polar Systems is a Dell Premier Partner and a charter member of the Microsoft Certified Partner program.*

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