Dennis Family Corporation ushers in new era of process improvement and automation with spend management solution

Implementation of Concur for expense management is part of the continual improvement process for a company dealing with rapid organisational growth and greater business complexity.

About Dennis Family Corporation
The Dennis Family Corporation (DFC) is a family-owned and operated property development business with operations throughout Victoria, southern New South Wales and south-east Queensland. Residential land development and housing construction form the integral part of the day-to-day business. DFC manages a growing portfolio of development projects in Victoria and south-east Queensland, whilst the housing business operates under the Dennis Family Homes brand and currently builds approximately 1,000 homes each year in Victoria and southern New South Wales. The company’s proven track record of success has been built on the foundations of more than 55 years of property industry experience of the Dennis family. DFC currently employs approximately 400 staff who work from offices in three states of operation, including its head office in Melbourne.

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Luke Simpson, Business Analyst, Dennis Family Corporation

Company Name:
Dennis Family Corporation

Solutions
Concur® Expense
Concur Expensesit® Pro

Industry
Property Development

Company Size
400 employees

Location
Australia

Why Concur?
• More strategic decision making from greater visibility of business spend
• Better end user experience through automation and simplification of processes
• More accurate allocation and accounting of costs across the business
• Removal of manual processes and reduced paper flow
• Automation generating significant time and cost savings
• Integration with current and planned ERP systems
• Providing the opportunity to completely redesign spend management processes
• Extension of functionality to mobile devices
Prioritising its expense automation implementation

DFC has expanded its business operations and undergone significant growth. That has necessitated increased investment in application development and process improvement. As a result, DFC’s IT department, including its applications group, has transformed from a focus on ‘keeping the lights on’ to a proactive team implementing new technologies and greater business automation. One of the major projects that DFC is undertaking is the implementation of a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. The company was exposed to the Concur Expense platform during the ERP vendor evaluation phase.

Immediate cost, speed and efficiency gains

Prior to implementing Concur, DFC’s expense management process involved the use of an Excel spreadsheet, manual approvals and data entry into the ERP. Expense claims had to be completed manually by staff, with a printed form attached with hard copy receipts sent to the accounts payable (AP) team in DFC’s Melbourne head office for processing. That process was time-consuming, inefficient and required considerable administrative work to re-enter data into the ERP system, check and validate line items, and reconcile spending.

DFC has implemented Concur Expense for up to 80 active credit card users across the organisation, managing between 60 and 70 statements each month. The solution is integrated with DFC’s ERP system so that expense data is automatically imported and validated, rather than having to be re-keyed.

As DFC Business Analyst, Luke Simpson explains, Concur has also enabled DFC to employ a more streamlined method for expense processing.

“There’s no need for staff to remember or look up general ledger codes – now they can use simple descriptions for expenses,” he states.

DFC staff are also using the Concur ExpenseIt Pro mobile app, which allows them to take a photo of each receipt and automatically import these into their Concur Expense account, attaching them to their expense claims when they submit.

DFC is currently in the process of running a user engagement survey for the Concur project and there has already been strong positive feedback, with one survey respondent writing:

“[It is] far more stress-free not having to collect receipts, easier to update the statement throughout the month, not just at the end when you seem to always have limited time.”

As Luke Simpson also notes, Concur provides DFC’s staff with visibility and transparency of all spending.

“This aids in the analysis of the type of expenditure being incurred and helps track the frequency of card holder spend. The latter is important as it allows the business to determine if there is an actual need for the card, as issuing cards unnecessarily chews company credit and associated fees. Concur also ensures spending compliance,” he says.

Innovative approach to expense management

Generating more than just efficiency gains and cost savings, Concur has been a catalyst for a complete transformation of spend management at DFC.

The Concur project gave DFC the opportunity to

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Luke Simpson, Business Analyst, Dennis Family Corporation
consider all aspects of expense management, rather than simply automating the existing process.

“That’s had a fundamental impact on both process and policy,” Simpson comments.

“All our key stakeholders on the Concur project were very open to change, with the attitude that we ‘don’t need to keep doing things just because we’ve always done it this way’,” he adds.

Prior to Concur, DFC’s method for managing credit card spend was an AP process. The card providers were set up in the ERP system as suppliers, then each employee’s monthly report was created as an invoice against the appropriate supplier. From there, DFC’s AP team would individually journal the clearing payment amounts against the suppliers during the bank reconciliation process.

“The question we asked ourselves was ‘is having staff re-key all this information via the AP process the most efficient solution or is there a better alternative?’ Concur, along with its integration options, allowed us to build a custom end-to-end solution from incurring the spend to accounting for it in the general ledger,” Simpson says.

Now, DFC receives an automated bank feed into Concur for all its credit card spend, with the monthly card balances being automatically paid. Instead of the card holder having to submit an expense claim balanced against a credit card statement each month, they now have to balance their Concur report to zero, done by including the clearing payment transaction.

“That’s eliminated work for our finance team to balance our accounts each month. That’s pretty unique – most companies wouldn’t have this automated process going all the way through,” Simpson suggests.

“Also, people shouldn’t get behind in their expense claims. In the past, they might be two or three months behind. Now it leaves open items on our bank reconciliation, with Finance chasing them up when they fall too far behind,” he continues.

With Concur, all our expense reports now go through our accountants, not our AP – which means that we can ensure that costs are allocated correctly. The financial controller or accountant responsible is making the decision on how spending should be allocated – rather than that decision being in the hands of our end users.”

Concur has also freed up DFC to move reimbursements from AP to HR.

“It makes more sense, as HR is responsible for payment of staff salaries and benefits. We can use our existing payroll system and we don’t have to maintain employee bank details in the ERP as well,” Simpson says.

Successful implementation approach

To ensure the successful adoption of Concur, DFC took the first design through a pilot with users.
across different departments within the business. This process uncovered a number of different requirements which were then fed back into the functionality of the solution.

With the rollout to the 80 credit card users, DFC developed a structured training program with flexibility built in.

“Learning a new expense management system is not always a high priority for our staff, so we had to be flexible and adapt to users' last minute schedule changes,” Simpson explains.

In addition to scheduled training sessions, DFC supported the rollout with supplementary training material such as manuals. As a result of the approach, there was strong acceptance across the board.

DFC also benefited from a dedicated Concur implementation project manager, providing guidance and support throughout the project.

While the Finance team at DFC drove the design of the Concur solution, the attention given by DFC’s Applications team to understanding the business needs of the users and engaging with them during the deployment ensured success.

“Focusing on Concur’s design, piloting and user training paid off. It’s a robust system – it just works,” Simpson emphasises.

**Further automation planned**

DFC is preparing to release Concur Expense to manage the cash reimbursements for all 400 employees, and is planning to incorporate mileage reimbursements for staff using their own vehicles for work travel.

The company’s new ERP system is expected to go live in 2018, which will require a relatively simple step to ensure integration with the Concur solution. After completing the ERP project, DFC is interested in exploring the potential of Concur Invoice as the next step in its digital transformation journey.

“The benefits we have seen already from the Concur project have given us a taste of what’s to come and we are excited about the future possibilities,” Simpson concludes.