



Active Government Solutions

Maximize Citizen Participation. Improve Operational Efficiency. Increase Citizen Service.

San Clemente Simplifies Payment Processing with Active Payment Manager

When the City of San Clemente needed to upgrade their payment processing software, they were determined to find the best solution to serve their citizens and to provide internal control and accountability. The problem? They required technology that could merge their existing software systems seamlessly and process funds in real time. They found it in The Active Network's Payment Manager solution.

San Clemente is a beautiful seaside city that sits 50 miles north of San Diego and 60 miles southeast of Los Angeles, California. The Spanish-themed municipality of 65,000 may be smaller in size than some, but their proximity to larger cities – as well as the median age of its citizens -- means that their town is filled with young, active families accustomed to utilizing the latest technology to make their days more efficient.

Since the year 2000, the City of San Clemente has used Active's Class software to manage their Recreation Center transactions and fulfill their scheduling and membership needs. The software has proven itself not only to the staff, but also to their citizens, who enthusiastically embrace the ability to pay their classes and membership fees by phone or over the counter.

Although the Recreation Center's software solution was securely in place, when the time came to streamline San Clemente's utility billing and payment integration needs, finding the right 'fit' was much more complex. "We needed a city-wide, front-end cashiering solution that would be consistent across all of our facilities, integrate with our existing systems, and give us greater control over our financial process," explains Tom Rendina, Finance Manager, City of San Clemente. According to Rendina, the city had payment and transaction activity occurring at multiple facilities, but the activity was not reaching the finance department's general ledger; as a result, the finance staff were only getting summary level transaction information. Adding to this, San Clemente's finance, recreation

and community development departments were all using different software systems for their daily operations without a common point-of sale application.

Setting the Standard for Software Integration

Before choosing Active Payment Manager, San Clemente reviewed several software solution providers to effectively fulfill their needs. "What we wanted to do here at city hall was to try to standardize the software," explains Rendina. "We liked a lot of the functionality with Active that was clearly beyond one competitor's approach: the idea that you can program buttons on the screen and drill down from there into sub-menus. Within permits you'd have subsets of individual kinds of permits. The menu system led you very easily to a direct link between what you were taking money for and where you wanted it to end up. So that was kind of nifty." With that competitor out of the running, San Clemente's due diligence left them with two choices: Active's Class software and another competing company. But not for long.

"The decision that we came to," recalls Rendina, "was that the third competitor had not written an interface with CRW [the software that deals with San Clemente's permits, business licensing, building, planning, engineering and code enforcement] so that would put an extra step in the process if we were going to go with them. In addition, that company didn't have any kind of scheduling capabilities to manage

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-Tom Rendina, Finance Manager, city of San Clemente

classes and recreation activity. The fact that we’d have to pay more money to write an interface with CRW and it still didn’t solve Recreation’s problems put them in a secondary place. As we went through these decision points,” concludes Rendina, “the other two competitors fell out of the running because they couldn’t do it all. We chose Active because we knew the team had done integrations with CRW and would also be able to do a fast integration with our finance software, Eden. It became somewhat of an easy selection; by deductive process, we basically got to the best product.”

Providing Accurate and Centralized Financials

As San Clemente sought to upgrade their technology, the Finance Department was committed to increasing the speed between the time that the city received payments from customers and the point that those monies were realized as revenue. “One of the things we have historically experienced,” explains Rendina, “is a high volume of payment activity in June, and the classes didn’t occur until July and August. Every year, we’d have this uptake in revenue and always explain to Recreation that the expenditure side of this revenue wasn’t going to happen until the next fiscal year. One of the things that we were able to do with Payment Manager was to go in and draw a better correlation between when we received money and when we recognized it as revenue. We’re now doing that within the system.”

The Finance Manager admits to being delighted with the way that The Active Network’s software has solved that pre-existing problem. “You get a ten in that regard,” says Rendina. “We’re very satisfied that the system now has the capability of recognizing the deposits today that are going to be revenue six weeks from now. We changed the rules of the way we operate; as a result, I’d score it 10 out of 10.”

“Using Payment Manager,” continues Rendina, “we’ve moved from a very labor-intensive process, where it was challenging just to deal with the daily cash reconciliation, to a level of very centralized control, raising the bar in terms of revenue recognition and real-time transaction activity. Now transactions are taken and posted at the same time and we’ve eliminated the daily upload to our general ledger and any data duplication. We’re also getting very detailed transaction information.”

Taking the Fast Track on Transactions

Payment Manager isn’t just good for your financial control and accounting, it also benefits your citizens. Since the solution is city-wide, a cashier at any location has the ability to search the database to obtain a citizen’s billing and account information. “In accounts receivable, we can query by a customer’s name or invoice number. For utility billing, we can query by address, customer name or customer number, making the process that much faster for the customer to find out what is due and when.” Payment Manager also allows cities to accept consolidated payments, making it possible for a customer to pay their utility bill, a parking ticket and their softball membership fees, all at any city payment location.

By moving to a live credit card transaction from a batching process, if there’s a problem with the transaction, the cashier will be aware of it right away. “From a customer standpoint,” states Rendina, “we previously wouldn’t know that. A day later we would have to communicate with them and try and solve that problem. On that front, the customer instantly knows that their payment is good.”

Solid Service from Implementation through Support

Having a reliable software solution is important, but being able

to follow-through with a well-organized installation and capable ongoing support is equally vital to the process. Rendina affirms that Active provided his organization with a solid support network from the initial install to the present day. “My experience has been very, very good in terms of what we needed to get done and the time frame we needed it all to get done in. The integration was very well supported; I had two Active contacts who were very proactive, we communicated on a weekly basis, we were in touch constantly by email, had a weekly conference call; we basically worked through issues pretty rapidly. I’ve done a lot of software conversion work and I would say that throughout the process, Active always did the right thing and moved the ball along nicely. Everything went smoothly. I was very satisfied.”

Benefits:

With Active Payment Manager, the City of San Clemente benefits with:

- ▶ Centralized, standardized cashiering and payment processing
- ▶ Real-time integration to existing systems
- ▶ Improved revenue recognition and financial reconciliation
- ▶ Faster payment transactions for citizens and staff