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Klarryse Murphy - Ravalli County CFO



THE BENEFITS

Since going through the RFP process and changing from lease to purchase of Black Mountain Software products, Ravalli County feels confident they made the right decision in retaining Black Mountain Software. The RFP process not only confirmed the completeness, competitiveness, and effectiveness of Black Mountain’s financial and tax software, it reinforced to Ravalli County staff members the availability of services that are part of the package when a client chooses Black Mountain Software. As Ravalli County CFO Klarryse Murphy pointed out, “Training and support are part of the purchase, so that’s awesome. Staff can feel comfortable calling whenever they need help or training, because there are no additional costs for that.”

Ravalli County Treasurer, Marie Keeton commented on the decision to stay with Black Mountain, saying, “I’m happy because ease of reports is important. And accuracy - that’s at the top of my list.” She also explained there are some very helpful features of the software that staff had not been using but are now learning to use. “I think modernizing how we do things is important. We weren’t taking advantage of some features, but we are changing that. For instance, I recently learned about setting up report packages, so I’m doing that now and it works like a charm. I am emailing the reports now, so I’m saving time and I am going green! It’s really nice to be able to do that!”

THE BOTTOM LINE

A few months after the RFP process concluded with Ravalli County choosing to stay with Black Mountain Software and choosing to purchase rather than lease the software, Ravalli County CFO Klarryse Murphy summed up the experience saying, “Before we purchased Black Mountain’s software, I would have rated it around a 7. It was very useable, it was great. But the last few months, it’s been more like a 9 or 10. We know more about the software and what it can do for us and we are taking advantage of the services more. And I also think Black Mountain is improving.” Klarryse’s observation is right on. Around the same time that Ravalli County issued its RFP, Black Mountain Software launched an initiative to enhance and restructure delivery of support services to Montana counties. It seems that Black Mountain Software and Ravalli County share a philosophy: It’s good to periodically review your software products and services to ensure that you have the most beneficial and cost-effective solutions.



*Klarryse Murphy
Ravalli County CFO*

C A S E S T U D Y

When Long-Time Client Ravalli County Put Black Mountain Software To The Test, Our Government Accounting Software Delivered High Scores Again

THE CLIENT

Ravalli County, located in west central Montana, has a population of about 40,000 and covers an area of 2,394 square miles. The county is governed by a five-person commission, has an annual budget of around \$30,000,000 and employs approximately 185 people. The county treasurer collects for and distributes taxes to seven schools and four incorporated towns. Ravalli County provides a variety of services such as road and bridge maintenance, document recording, land use planning, public health, and other essential services typical of a Montana county.

Within the county organization itself there are: IT support services; Human Resources; the Finance Department which manages, payroll, accounting, asset management and budget planning services; the Tax Department which manages tax billing and collection, and distribution of funds to other agencies and schools; the Clerk & Recorder Office which records, then indexes property and other legal documents and also manages property record address information used for tax billing. To keep Ravalli County humming, these departments need reliable software designed specifically to meet the county’s requirements.



145 Southlake Crest, Suite 1 • Polson, MT 59860

800.353.8829 • www.blackmountainsoftware.com

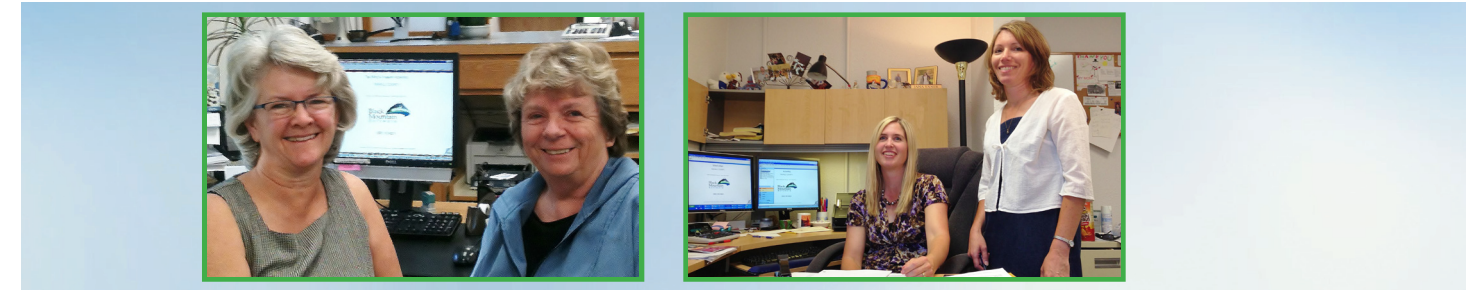
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Marie Keeton - Ravalli County Treasurer



BACKGROUND

In 1998, after using another vendor's government finance software for three years, Ravalli County was unhappy and began a search for software and service that would better meet their needs. They identified two Montana companies to further investigate: Black Mountain Software and CSA. After reviewing both, Ravalli County chose Black Mountain Software. Because of the experience with the prior software vendor, the county was sensitive to the potential risks of a large capital outlay; to limit their financial exposure, Ravalli County decided to lease the Black Mountain Software applications.

THE SITUATION

About 10 years later, the financial and tax software from Black Mountain Software still working well for them, Ravalli County's Clerk & Recorder wanted to explore document recording systems offered by other companies to see if one might provide a higher level of automation in managing the increased document recording volume her office was experiencing. The other department members and commissioners felt that the time was right to re-assess the lease option they had chosen so many years ago when converting to Black Mountain Software. Those two situations led the county to conclude that it was time to review their software situation and needs to see if better software alternatives were available for all of the departments.

THE APPROACH

The goals of Ravalli County's financial software review were to:

- ensure the county gets the best value for the money
- identify possible integrated solutions to incorporating road department data needs
- gauge how well their current software vendor is keeping up technologically
- ensure the county moves forward with the best software for the job

In 2011, Ravalli County began work on a request for proposal (RFP). Even though Montana law at the time required RFPs only when the value of the purchase is \$50,000 or more, Commissioner Greg Chilcott contends, "It's just good business to get competitive bids when you're considering any important purchase."

Providing further explanation was Commissioner J.R. Iman, who added, "We also needed to better understand services and products available. When we first go out to get something, we don't know what is available or possible. We know what we've had, but we don't know what we are going to get. An RFP

opens that process up for companies to show us new ideas." In addition to comparing solutions and prices, through the RFP process the county would determine whether or not the original benefit from leasing software from Black Mountain was still the right business decision.

The RFP was released in 2012. The county used a point system to score each company who submitted a proposal. The criteria were:

- References
- Experience
- Software requirements
- Adherence to terms of the RFP
- Cost

THE RESULTS

Black Mountain Software scored 94.5 out of 100 possible points in the RFP evaluation.

Ravalli County chose to keep Black Mountain Software applications for all of the financial and tax software products, which was 7 out of the 8 software applications out for bid. The county also made the decision to purchase Black Mountain Software products rather than continuing to lease.

These two decisions saved the county in two ways:

- The annual cost to Ravalli County **decreased** from about \$70,000 per year to \$36,000.
- Purchasing Black Mountain's government financial and tax software **saved** the county a minimum of \$82,000 over purchasing the other contender's (Tyler Technologies) software.

Possibly revealing some insight into how he was elected, Commissioner Chilcott commented, "Well, there are a few of us that are pretty cheap, so we were definitely looking at how much it would cost us." Laughing, Commissioner Iman, clarified, "We give frugal a bad name, but we are not cheap!" The commissioners' good-natured banter doesn't fool anyone, though; it is obvious that they are very serious about looking out for the county's tax payers and making smart decisions that save money.