Marketing Research Firm Improves Project Revenue by 33% with Mavenlink

THE COMMUNICATIONS FOR RESEARCH STORY

St. Louis Firm Elevates Agricultural Research

Communications for Research is a St. Louis–based company that performs primary marketing research. Fifty percent of Communications for Research's clients work in the agricultural industry, with many of the major clients being household brands. Every engagement is project based. At any given time, Communications for Research manages 80 to 110 active projects, with each lasting six to eight weeks, resulting in about 600 total annual projects.

INDUSTRY
Marketing Research

COMPANY
Communications for Research

SIZE
51-200 employees

WHAT MAVENLINK REPLACED
Microsoft Access, Proprietary Scheduling System, Email, Spreadsheets

BENEFITS
- Increased Median Project Value by 33%
- Increased Billable Time

Time Tracking

In the past, Communications for Research tracked time in spreadsheets, with team members logging between 60% to 90% of a billable rate on average. With Mavenlink, managers were able to gain greater visibility into how time was being spent. That visibility resulted in a 15% overall increase in utilization.

THE CHALLENGE

The Painful Side of Tracking Hundreds of Projects

Communications for Research was managing hundreds of projects on multiple systems. Their teams used Google Apps for file management. Project data was stored in an "endless stream of spreadsheets" and saved into various file folders. There were too many emails, with staff being copied on every project communication so they could stay updated.

Call center staff tracked their work, including timekeeping, in Microsoft Access, which turned into a "total nightmare." Management was also using a custom program for resource scheduling. The managers wanted one system that could track it all. They wanted to replace the time-consuming time tracking and siloed information sharing. Integrating with Google Apps for work and Quickbooks for accounting and payroll was also important.

Most of all, they just wanted to get rid of the email management of projects. Hundreds of emails per project were totalling tens of thousands of emails per year — and they were difficult to keep track of.

FROM THE SOURCE

"Last year's revenue grew 15%, and this year we're on track to grow revenue another 10%, in large part thanks to Mavenlink."

– Colson Steber, Co-CEO
  Communications for Research

> ## "Now we can see our business in real time.
>
> All of our people log into Mavenlink, click the play button, and assign whatever project and task to their time while they're working. Just getting time right used to be 100 hours a week of administration time. Now it's just a few hours each day. "

– COLSON STEBER, CO-CEO, COMMUNICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

$15,345.00	05 %
$7,500.00	12 %
$40,000.00	10 %
$12,000.00	15 %
$22,5000.00	08%

THE SWITCH TO MAVENLINK

An Efficient Switch to Single System Tracking

Communications for Research chose Mavenlink for project management, file tracking, resource management, and collaboration. They were also attracted to its time-tracking features and integrations.

Project Tracking

With 600 projects per year, Communications for Research staff were communicating primarily through email. Team members were getting hundreds of emails and file attachments per project. With Mavenlink, that ended. Employees collaborate in project workspaces and dashboards. These track communication, activity, tasks, files, and more. Projects and files are searchable, so staff find what they need without sifting through emails.

Resource Management

"The most complicated thing to do when running 80 concurrent projects is resource allocation," Steber said. Communications for Research uses Mavenlink to manage resources. One positive impact has been the elimination of inefficiencies from manual time tracking. "We work 12,000 billable hours per month," Steber said. By switching to Mavenlink, management began seeing where employees were spending time. They increased billable time by 2%, resulting in extra monthly revenue.

FROM THE SOURCE

"With Mavenlink, we were able to increase billable time — thanks to getting more efficient time tracking, time submissions, and visibility into where people were spending time."

– Colson Steber, Co-CEO
Communications for Research

"In less than 24 hours,
we were able to review the entire history of the project, provide
specifics on which issues arose, and provide detailed timekeeping.
The client said, 'No one can ever do that.' But we easily did. **"**

– COLSON STEBER, CO-CEO, COMMUNICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Next for the team is to begin using Mavenlink's new skills resourcing
features. "Based off my assessments of how much stronger the resource
allocation and skills tracking tool have gotten, that's the next biggest
leap for us," Steber said.

The Results

Charging 33% More Per Project, Increased Utilization, and Greater Transparency

Mavenlink archives all project history for Communications for Research.
Since the company began using Mavenlink three years ago, it has been
able to review those records and discover trends, including downtime
and billable time. That's helped the company information with clients
and launch new pricing models.

Project Price Rose 33%

Communications for Research leverages Mavenlink to analyze completed
projects and better understand the time, tasks, and billable hours each
project required. They were even able to raise prices 20% for a large
client. "They accepted it all because we came with the full story, all of
which data was based on Mavenlink archives, to prove our case." The
company's overall median project value rose by 33 over three years.
"We're running the same project volume," Steber said. "But we have way
more projects earning 20% or more than what they were before."

Client Transparency Strengthened Relationships

Having centralized project details has also enabled better client transparency. Communication for Research's largest client asked the company to provide detailed task views to understand why its own internal research team hadn't performed the work. "They wanted specific information on eight projects, including what the studies were about, what we did," Steber said. In the past, gathering that information would have required days of IT work. "In less than 24 hours, we were able to review the entire activity feed, provide specifics on which issues arose, and provide detailed timekeeping. The client said, 'No one can ever do that.' But we easily did." In fact, Steber and other management team members can go back to every project they've performed over the past three years and access detailed project data as needed.