

Success Story

Sierra at Tahoe improves profitability with more informed decisions after switch from NetSuite

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Jim Feeney

Controller, Sierra at Tahoe

Sierra at Tahoe is a top ski resort in the western U.S., attracting hundreds of thousands of skiers and snowboarders a year to its lofty slopes just south of Lake Tahoe, California. Created in 1946, Sierra at Tahoe is an independent operation without the greater resources of major U.S. chains that have more than a dozen resorts in their portfolios. For Sierra at Tahoe, that puts a premium on business agility, cost efficiency, and informed decisions—especially as the company navigates the financial peaks and valleys between its winter and summer seasons.

“We don’t have the deep pockets that the big operating companies do, so we need to be nimble and quick and continue to make smart financial decisions,” said Jim Feeney, Sierra at

Tahoe controller. The need for sound spending prompted the ski resort to re-evaluate its Oracle NetSuite financial management platform, in place since 2010. As a three-year NetSuite license neared expiration in late 2020, Sierra at Tahoe found itself facing a significant price increase to renew its NetSuite contract.

Key Outcomes

- Saving 54% a year in software licensing vs. NetSuite.
- Gained improved reporting and dashboard capabilities.
- Providing real-time key metrics to 35 operational managers.
- Eliminated seven hours a month of manual reporting, AP work.



Company
Sierra at Tahoe

Location
California, US

Industry
Hospitality

Sage Products
Sage Intacct



About Sierra at Tahoe

Play is the name of the game at Sierra at Tahoe, where 2,000 acres and 2,212 vertical feet of skiable terrain offer skiers and snowboarders the freedom to explore their style at any level.



With Sage Intacct dashboards, Sierra at Tahoe can easily calculate and display revenue per skier visit, rental unit, food and beverage, training class size and more.

Ski resort finds better value & reporting with Sage Intacct
Sierra at Tahoe had been generally satisfied with NetSuite, apart from reporting and dashboard limitations, but the solution grew too costly for a resort with a lean three-person accounting team. “We watch our costs very closely, and with NetSuite we were paying for a lot of functionality that we didn’t use and didn’t need, such as ecommerce and inventory management,” Jim said. Sierra at Tahoe turned to Sage Intacct, reducing licensing costs by 54% and gaining better reporting and dashboards that are saving time and delivering improved financial intelligence for executives and operational managers.

A ‘significant improvement’ in tracking key metrics
Sierra at Tahoe selected Sage Intacct after evaluating competing solutions, including Microsoft Dynamics. Best-in-class financial reporting and dashboards were key differentiators, along with affordability and suitability for a small to mid-size organization. “Sage Intacct is designed for the small to mid-market business that’s outgrown QuickBooks but doesn’t need that full, super expensive NetSuite system,” Jim said. An “amazing” implementation by Cargas, a Sage Intacct partner, got Sierra at Tahoe poised to capitalize on its new financial management platform.

With Sage Intacct, Sierra at Tahoe has rolled out dashboards that provide about 35 operational managers with key metrics that weren’t readily available through NetSuite. “NetSuite had very limited ability to track metrics like skier visits, ski rental units, those types of things,” Jim said. As a workaround, Sierra at Tahoe devised a way to “trick” NetSuite into accounting for operational metrics in P&L reports. Then, Jim’s team would create Excel-based P&L reports emailed each month to operational managers. Without drill-down into expenses, managers would often turn to Jim for details.

Now with Sage Intacct dashboards, Sierra at Tahoe can easily pull in statistical account data to calculate and display revenue per skier visit, rental unit, training class size, food and beverage—“dozens and dozens of different metrics,” as Jim put it. Dashboards also reflect expenses and purchase orders so that managers can easily track budget, actuals, and upcoming expenses. “We have a projected P&L report that’s key for our operational managers to know where they are, and what’s coming up,” Jim said. “That capability did not exist in NetSuite. Giving operational managers access to their financial information in Sage Intacct is a significant improvement over NetSuite.”

A ‘significant improvement’ in tracking key metrics
For Sierra at Tahoe, the net result of superior reporting and dashboards is improved financial intelligence to help guide the business. “We have better forecasting, more real-time information, and more informed decision making since the switch to Sage Intacct,” Jim said. “We’re more efficient at decision making, which ultimately will improve profitability.” Insights are helping to guide spending decisions small and large, from kitchen equipment to snow groomers that start at \$300,000 for a new machine.





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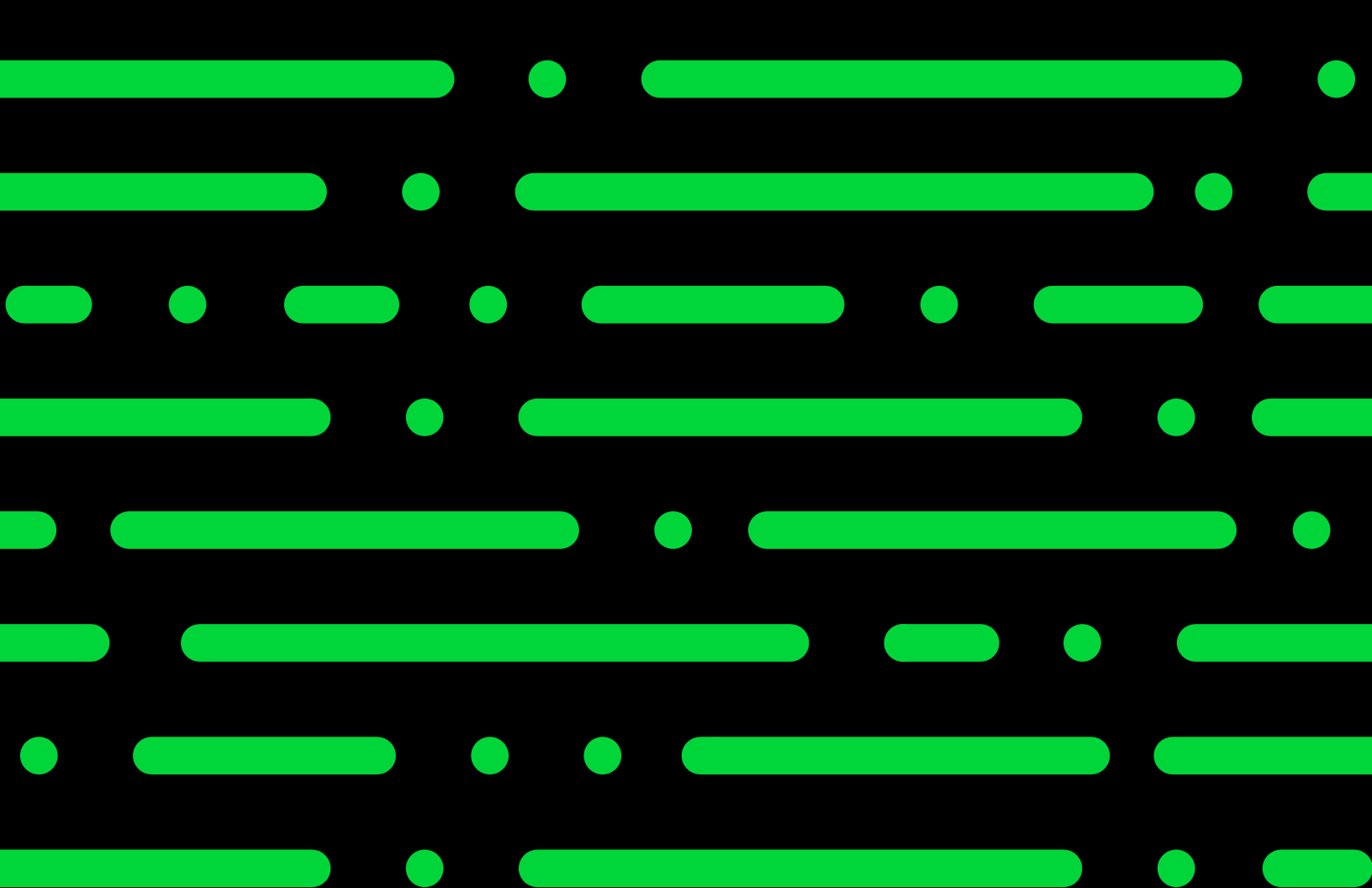
Jim Feeney

Controller, Sierra at Tahoe

Reporting insights through Sage Intacct have helped Sierra at Tahoe adapt to a pair of major disruptions. First, the ski resort needed to recover throughout its 2020-21 season from a premature March 2020 shutdown forced by COVID-19. Next, Sierra at Tahoe was struck in late August 2021 by the huge wildfire that destroyed buildings, damaged chairlifts, and burnt thousands of trees that have to be removed. Repairs are under way, but opening for the season remained in doubt as of early 2022. “It becomes a cash flow and working capital equation—do you need to borrow money? What can you afford to do, what do you have to cut?” Jim said. “Sage Intacct is helping us adapt with accurate, real-time information.”

Cash flow reporting has proven straightforward with Sage Intacct, saving Jim the three hours he’d spend each month forecasting cash flow in Excel because it wasn’t viable in NetSuite. “There was a cash flow report in NetSuite, but it didn’t work,” Jim said. “Sage Intacct is the first accounting system with a cash flow statement that actually works.” Sierra at Tahoe is saving another four hours a month because operational managers are paying more attention to purchase orders, prominently on their dashboards. As a result, AP staff doesn’t need to chase down as many missing POs.





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