NETSUITE

Run Your Advertising Agency More Efficiently with NetSuite

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In advertising, it is very common for firms to run their businesses on a patchwork of technologies and systems that are loosely integrated and/or rely on manual processes to share information. NetSuite's single unified solution provides a better way for advertising firms to run operations and to transform their business. This white paper highlights some of the operational challenges that advertising firms face today and illustrates how deploying NetSuite can help agencies run their operations more effectively.

> "WE WERE FLYING BLIND, AND NOW WITH NETSUITE WE HAVE INCREASED ACCOUNTABILITY ACROSS ALL DEPARTMENTS AND CAN MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS ON THE SAME PAGE. NETSUITE HAS ALLOWED US TO GROW AND EVOLVE AND STAY ON TOP OF OUR INDUSTRY. WE WOULDN'T BE WHERE WE ARE TODAY WITHOUT THE COMFORT AND FEATURES NETSUITE HAS PROVIDED OVER THE LAST SIX YEARS."

ADTEGRITY®

> "NETSUITE IS A CRITICAL PART OF THE EFFICIENCIES WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT NETSUITE IS THE PLATFORM FOR US TO GROW ON."

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Challenges Advertising Agencies Face Today

The fragmented approach to technology in place at many agencies has many shortcomings, including:

- Executives are effectively 'flying blind' when it comes to making timely decisions because they don't have the necessary real-time information to hand when they need it.
- Clients continually ask for greater transparency, but agencies find it difficult to meet that demand because data is trapped in various siloed systems, leading to laborious fire drills to satisfy a client request for information.
- Agency spending on freelancers is hard to track and manage, which can quickly erode profit margins.
- Remote agency employees are not able to easily access key information or enter time via mobile devices like smartphones or tablets.
- Agencies with international operations find gaining visibility into their business is even more challenging due to poor integration between different systems in different countries.

There is a Better Way for Advertising Companies

It doesn't have to be like this. NetSuite provides a unified solution that shortens the pitch-to-cash cycle for advertising firms, offers insight into the intermediary steps involved in delivery and production, and enables better resource and traffic management.

One of the most acute pain points for creative and branding agencies is the workflow used to manage human resources. By deploying a consolidated system, analysts estimate that firms increase utilization by an average of 8%. That translates into impressive net profitability gains.

A Flexible Platform to Drive the Business

NetSuite provides a highly flexible unified system that can be configured to support an agency's unique workflows and processes, as well as to accommodate different roles and permissions.

- Every user has access to the most real-time information, so everyone works from the same single unified 'version of the truth.' Yet, each user only sees the information relevant to his or her role, whether they are an account manager, an individual contributor delivering creative services or a controller managing invoices and receivables.
- Templates are easily developed to standardize jobs across the organization. These can save time by structuring workflows for users.

- Users with iPhone, Android or BlackBerry smartphones or with tablets can access NetSuite when they are away from the office.
- NetSuite's Report Writer allows firms to create their own custom reports.

NetSuite's single unified solution provides a collaborative environment that connects all stakeholders within an advertising agency—operations, account managers, employees and the finance team. At the same time, NetSuite also caters to the specific needs of each of those communities offering perspective for all four groups of stakeholders. Let's examine each in turn.

The Operations Perspective: Keeping the Wheels Turning

The operations dashboard in NetSuite is a simple, intuitive command center for advertising agencies' operations staff. Navigation bars enable users to manage daily activities and access project management areas. From the dashboard, it's easy to review team performance and brand profitability, manage work cycles and approve time and expense.
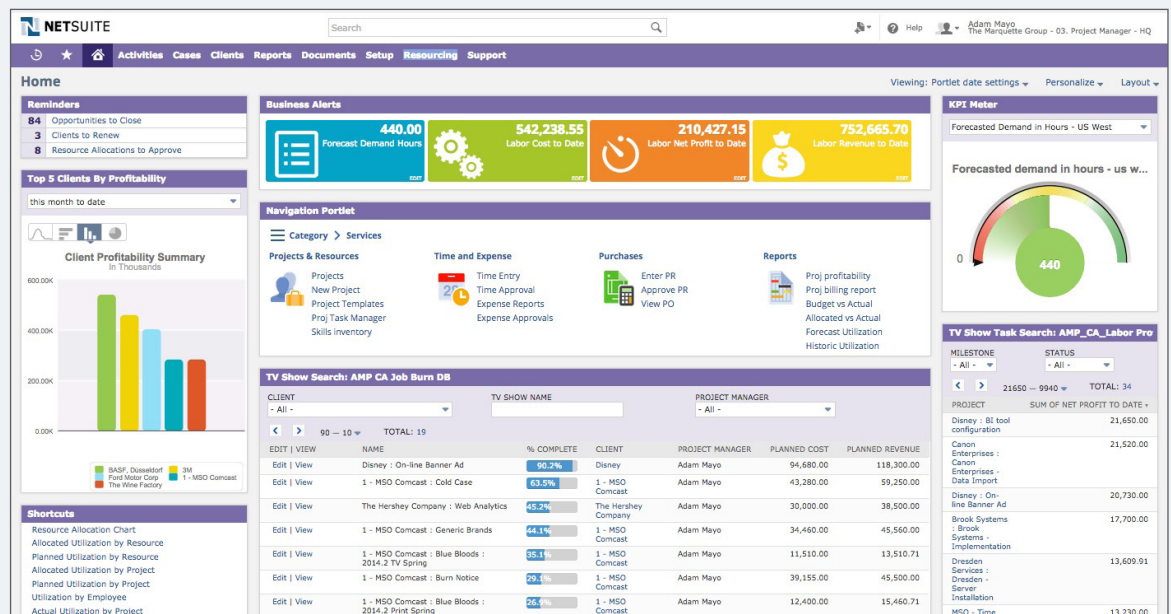
Figure 1: The dashboard displays key data like project profitability and forecast resource demand, including job burn (middle bottom) to track project progress and budget.

NetSuite makes it easy to:

- **Review current and future staffing requirements**. Operations staff can view which projects people are working on, whether individual employees are utilized to their highest capacity, and who is available to staff new client work.

- **Better manage the expense of subcontractors and freelancers**. In a few clicks, users can conduct a head count analysis to determine whether it will be necessary to use the subcontractor pool or hire freelancers. With analytics and workflow, this tool can reduce the costs associated with excessive use of external resources.

- **Obtain a 360-degree view of a client**. With one click, operations staff can see key client information on a single screen, including address and key contact information, proposals, outstanding jobs and uploaded files.

One of the more challenging aspects of project management is the staffing and trafficking process. NetSuite provides tools that simplify resource management and trafficking to ensure that staff are utilized to their fullest capacity to meet new/changing client requirements or hit project/individual-level profitability. For example, skills and competencies can be uploaded for employees. This makes it easy to find people with specific skills, as well as identify gaps in certain competencies.
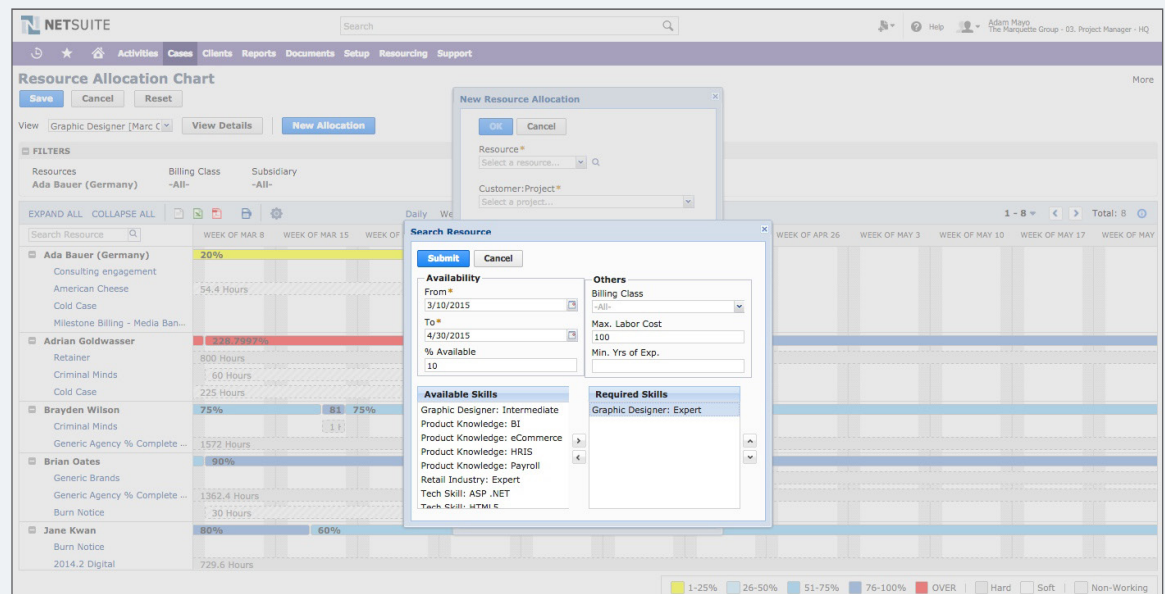
Figure 2: This search wizard allows a resource manager to find resources based on availability, cost limitation, years of experience and specific expertise.

The results of the search provide a ranking based skillset score and availability. The resource can be selected for allocation directly from this window.

Figure 3: To meet new/changing client needs or project/overall profitability, NetSuite makes it easy to find people based on skills and within cost ceilings.

As individuals are assigned to projects, NetSuite generates a color-coded staffing chart that clearly differentiates between pending staffing requests, requested staffing assignments that need approval, confirmed staffing assignments and rejected requests.

Out-of-the-box reports, like the job burn report and status of time cards, help operational employees stay on top of project budgets and administrative details.
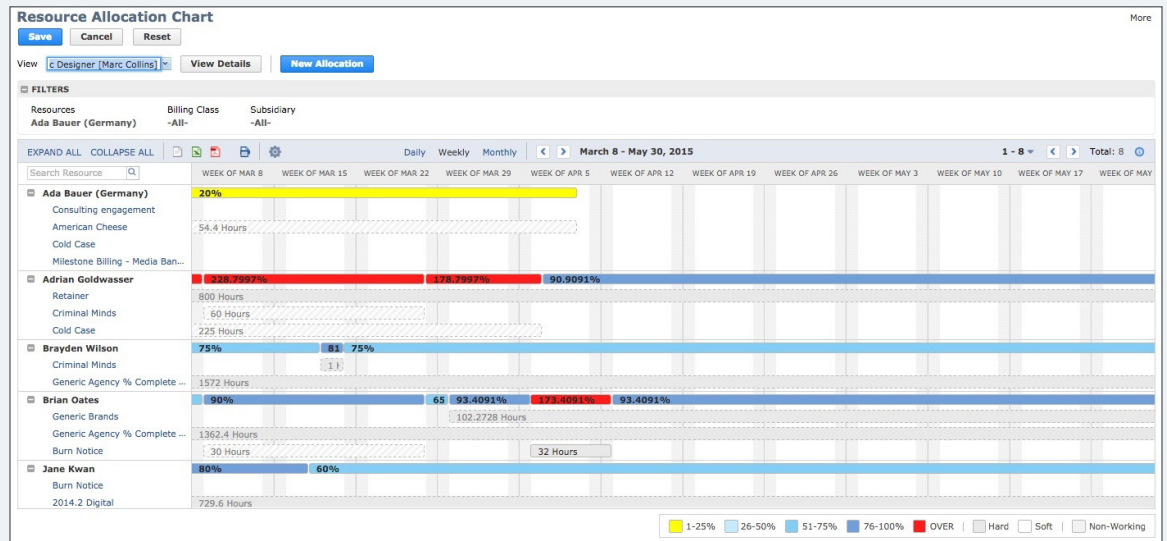
Figure 4: Powerful agency-wide visibility of utilization/availability and simple drag and drop management of resources (staff and freelancers.)

The Account Manager's Perspective: Ensuring Client Satisfaction

Account managers can turn to the client dashboard in NetSuite to see everything about the accounts and brands they are managing in one single click. The dashboard shows total sales with each client and all open jobs, and provides quick access to create new proposals and estimates without ever leaving the screen. This enables account managers to focus on key accounts at the right time and at the right cost.
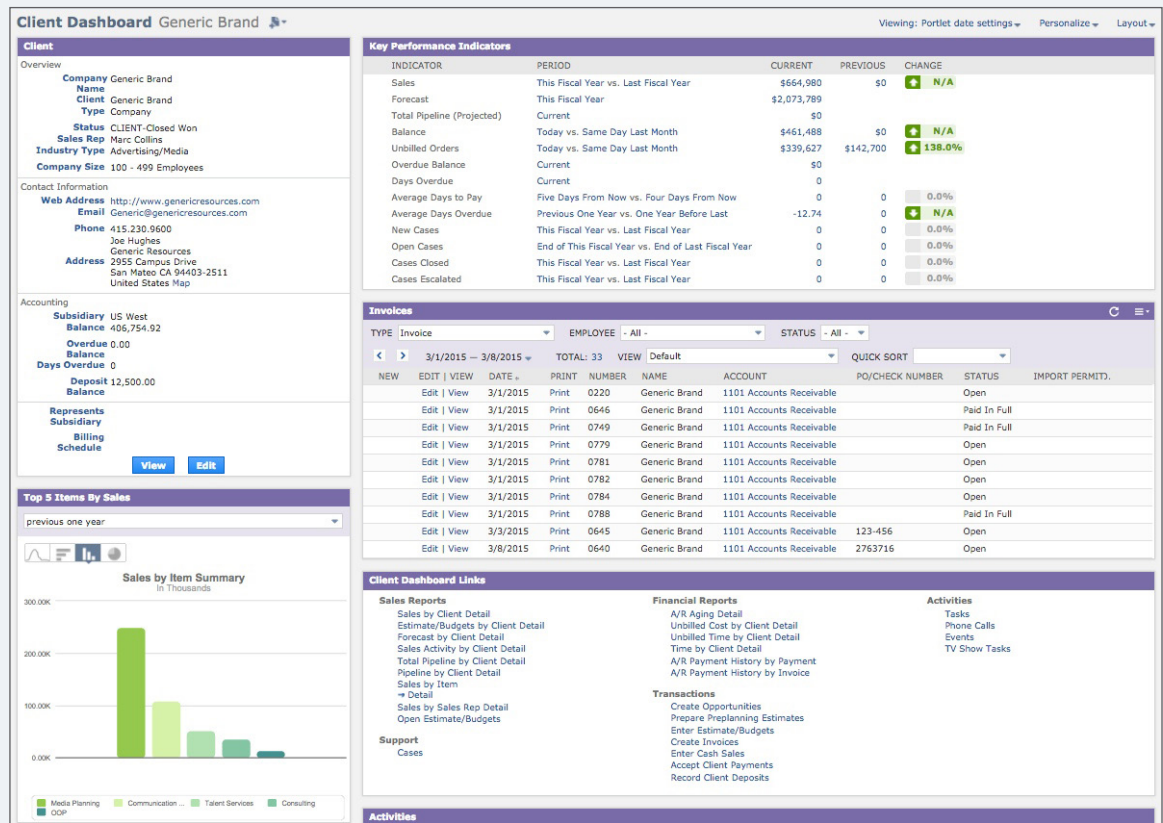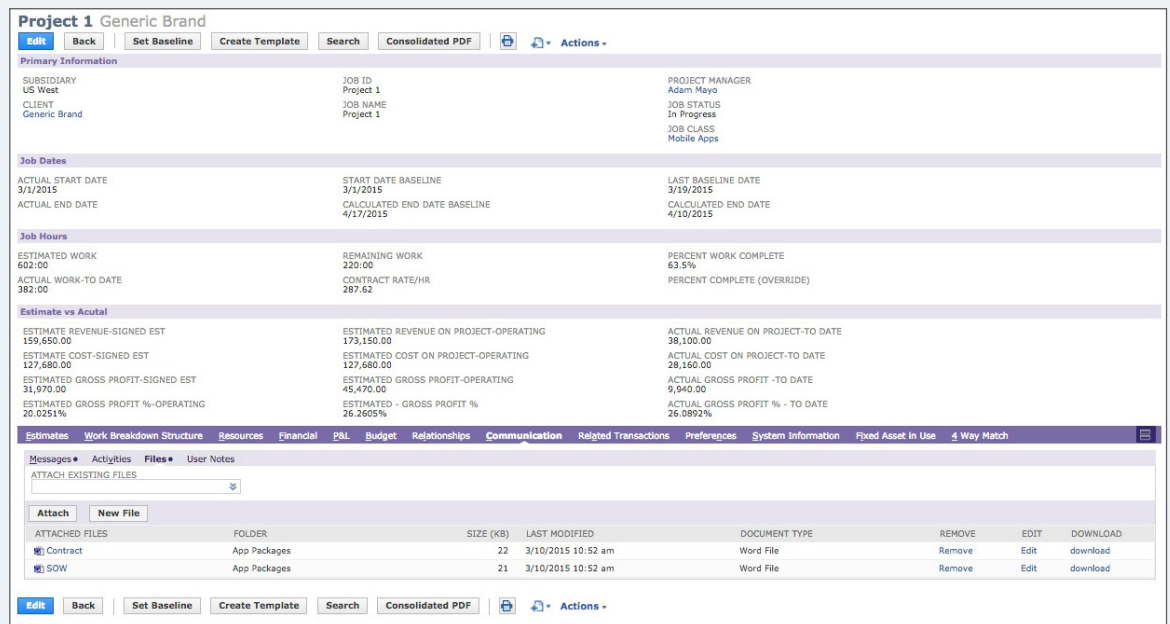
Figure 5: 360 Customer records of all communications and transactions: KPIs like A/R aging and easy drill downs into specific invoices.

NetSuite makes it easy to:

- **Manage job status**. Account managers can manage unsigned work that is still in the bid/proposal stage, keep track of ongoing signed work and access historical data on completed projects for reporting and trending analysis.

- **Monitor key status metrics**. From the client dashboard, it is possible to drill into supporting details and gain additional insights.

- **Store project job jacket information in a centralized place**. Project-related documents like pricing estimates and purchase orders can be stored in NetSuite's project workspace.
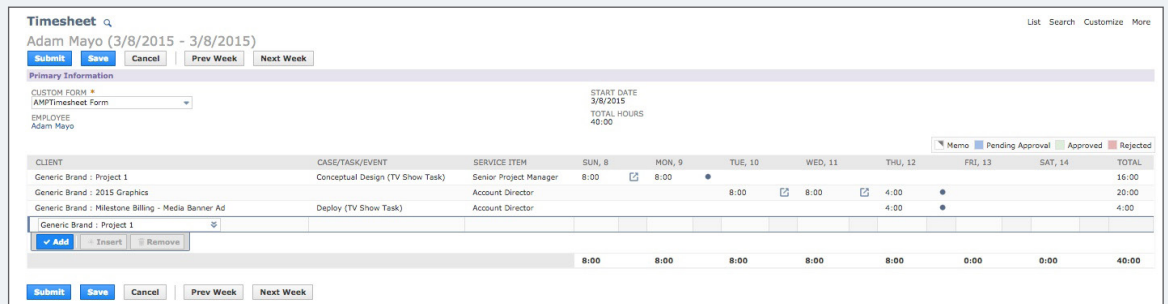

Figure 6: Estimate Tab provides easy access to all client documents (emails, contract, estimates, SOWs, POs) and vendor invoices and time sheets.

The Employee Perspective: Entering Time and Expense

Employees can access a simple timesheet view to enter their hours and expenses from a computer or from mobile devices using the NetSuite time and expense application. Many NetSuite advertising clients set up contractors and freelancers as system users so they have access to the same timesheet screen as the rest of the organization.

Capturing travel expenses has never been easier. Employees can attach scanned copies of their receipts or take a photo of them with their smartphone and link them to their expense reports. After an employee submits a timesheet for review, it follows whatever approval process the organization has defined. Approval workflows are completely flexible and configurable.
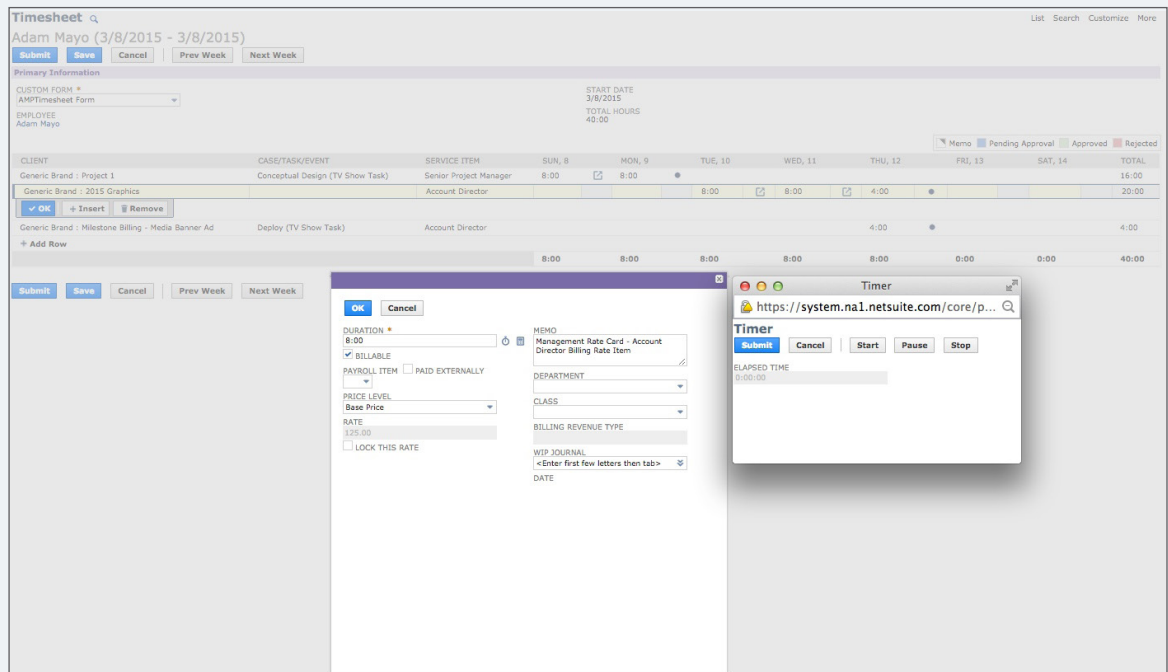
Figure 7: Employees can enter (customizable) time sheets via mobile NetSuite apps (available on iPhone, iPad and Android) or any browser-enabled devices.

Other tools available to employees in NetSuite include the timer function. This is useful for creative people who don't want to be distracted from their work. They can log into the system, start a timer and turn off the timer after their work is completed.

Figure 8: Time sheet forms can be simple or complex.

The Finance Team's Perspective: Streamlining Billing and Revenue Recognition

NetSuite offers highly flexible billing capabilities. The system supports time and material billing, retainers, pre-negotiated hourly or daily rates, milestone or fixed-bid projects, and more. In addition, purchases, third-party costs and travel expenses can be rebilled to the client.

Revenue recognition rules are fully configurable, which offer flexibility around how financials are reported to the management team and board of directors. Since all financial information is tracked in real time, the entire finance team can have visibility into the data and benefits from transparency.

NetSuite is a comprehensive financial application that manages invoicing and tracks information from receivables and payables back to the general ledger. For advertising firms with international operations, the NetSuite OneWorld global business offering consolidates information from multiple entities on the fly while supporting more than 190 currencies, 19 languages and tax compliance in more than 50 countries.

It is possible, for example, to view balance sheets, accounts receivables documents and individual invoices displayed in the home office's currency. Financial leaders can see the performance of operations across sectors. Foreign exchange rates are automated using Xignite.com from Morningstar, or organizations can enter in their own exchange rates, if desired.

Conclusion

Running an advertising agency depends on talented people working together efficiently to deliver great work to their client, which results in repeatable business. The solutions and tools that an agency uses can play a pivotal role in fostering collaboration in an effective, efficient way—or they can undermine how well that firm can serve its clients.

A single unified system like NetSuite ensures alignment across every single employee within an agency from front-line creative employees to account managers to operations staff and finance professionals. Employees are empowered to reach their optimal levels of utilization, complete projects faster and accelerate the quote-to-cash cycle.