

PENSION **PROFILES**

Retiring a Legacy, Gaining Efficiency

SBCERA's Significant Efficiency Boost with PensionGold® Solution

As retirement systems prepare for the impact of the baby boom generation reaching retirement age, which will increase workload as well as demands for expanded customer service, they often find that their aging computer systems are simply not up to the challenge.

San Bernardino County Employees' Retirement Association (SBCERA) is a case in point. The fund's applications, which resided on a mainframe system operated by San Bernardino County government, offered such limited functionality that most users were also utilizing PC-based applications such as Excel and Access for offline calculations and tracking data. Users calculated pensions manually, which led to inconsistent benefit calculation. In addition, users had to access multiple systems to get the member information they needed.

The application software, which had been developed in the late 70s, not

only provided limited functionality but also limited SBCERA's ability to scale and grow, according to Mark Jolicoeur, SBCERA Chief Information Officer.

"It's pretty clear our hands were tied with those legacy systems we were using," Jolicoeur said. "We were faced with the choice of keeping the legacy systems and trying to expand their functionality or update systems by bringing in something new. Those of us in the IT arena lobbied for the latter. We knew a client/server solution was more cost-effective than mainframe solutions, and we felt a third-party vendor would be able to provide a more comprehensive solution than anything we could build ourselves."

Once the decision was made to implement a third-party solution, SBCERA initiated an RFP process and evaluated the proposals it received. That process narrowed the field of

possibilities to PensionGold® from LRS and one other competitor.

Clear Choice

PensionGold is a proven, state-of-the-art retirement administration system that provides pension administrators with an integrated, secure and automated solution featuring a single source for all of the information they need to service their members quickly and efficiently.

As Jolicoeur recalled, the choice was clear. "Both applications 'answered the mail,' but PensionGold appeared to be much easier to use," Jolicoeur said. "There was also the cost factor. We had a much better chance of not breaking the bank during implementation with PensionGold. The competitor looked to be about three times as much cost for not much more value."

SBCERA chose to implement PensionGold, and the implementation was "nearly a 10 on a scale of 1 to 10" in Jolicoeur's opinion.

Executive Summary

After implementing the PensionGold solution, SBCERA staff can calculate benefit estimates in seconds, making the pension system more responsive to its members. In addition to speed, The PensionGold solution's powerful calculation engine ensures that estimates, even tricky DROP estimates, are accurate. All information on active members and retirees is now available on a single system, so SBCERA staff no longer has to obtain some information from one system and manually calculate estimates or benefits on a different system.

“PensionGold has helped us improve our efficiency and cost effectiveness,”

Christie Porter,
SBCERA Chief, Member and
Administrative Services.

Obvious Benefits

The benefits SBCERA has realized from the PensionGold system have been obvious, according to Christie Porter, Chief, Member and Administrative Services.

“PensionGold has helped us improve our efficiency and cost effectiveness,” Porter explained. “Our users only have to access one system to get member information. There are business rules built into the system, so the system doesn't allow people to calculate things their own way. Pensions and annuities are calculated the same way every time.”

Porter and Jolicoeur also mentioned improved employer reporting, more efficient access to imaged documents, and an unexpected change: SBCERA was able to reorganize and take over services that had been outsourced previously, including the benefit payroll process. Even with that change, both estimated efficiency gains as high as 60% due to the PensionGold implementation.

“We are more cost effective, we provide better customer service, we are more timely in our service,” Jolicoeur said.

“We have the ability to deliver our products and services to members in a more timely fashion.”

True Partners

Jolicoeur and Porter stressed that SBCERA views LRS as a true partner instead of merely a vendor. Jolicoeur praised the technical capabilities of PensionGold technical support and said that SBCERA is very pleased with the relationship it has with LRS two years after the implementation.

Noting that project management is his personal passion, Jolicoeur said that a successful project “is not really about the 30 months of implementation, it's about the seven years that follow the implementation. With LRS, we believe that everybody's working on our behalf.”

Porter agreed. “The most successful projects are the ones where you view the vendor as a partner instead of an adversary or someone who's always trying to take money out of your pocket,” she said.



To get the whole story about PensionGold solutions, just call our pension specialists at 217-793-3800 or visit us online at www.LRS.com/pengold