

# University of Alberta IST Reduces IT Costs While Increasing Services



University of Alberta IST department needed detailed operational cost information to rationalize and improve IT service delivery. Upland ComSci gave them the visibility they needed to find new approaches.



## The Challenge: Provide Value and Prove It

In the face of significant cuts in funding, the University of Alberta began to consolidate IT resources and service provision across faculties in 2012 with the aim of rationalizing. With demand for services increasing, however, and stakeholders concerned about effective provision, both in terms of timeliness and cost, the institution's Information Services & Technology (IST) department faced an operational deficit.

Cheryl Earle, joined the university in 2013 as Director of Finance, Administration and Human Resources, within IST. The IST department needed to develop a practice of proactive service provision, as opposed to reactive fixing of problems. Cheryl's goal was to enable them to change the way they looked at what they were doing. IST also wanted to have better conversations with their clients about the value they were adding. With these goals in mind, IST realized it did not have the management information it needed, as the financial statement at their disposal offered no breakdown of services and costs.

To be able to answer the questions IST was asking, understand the cost structure and cost drivers, make sound management decisions, and illustrate value, Cheryl and her team built a cost model in Excel. This proof of concept provided a detailed look at the costs involved in certain services, sparking some of the change they were aiming for. However, the tool was unstable, unwieldy and hard to maintain. Additionally, due to its manual nature, data was not up to date, and there was no correspondence with other systems they used, undermining its credibility in their eyes.

IST began looking for a software solution.

## University of Alberta, Central Information Systems and Technologies Department

IST provides core services to 38,000 students and 9,000 staff members. These include network access, ID administration, G Suite, access to enterprise applications that support admin, teaching and research. In addition, approximately 60% of the faculties and all central units are integrated and supported by Central IST, expanding the service offering to include end user support, server and application support, and more. IST employs 300 people and has an annual budget of CA\$55-65 million.

### Challenges

- Need to upgrade operations processes and avoid budget deficit
- Lack of information to demonstrate value provided by IT
- Limited data to support decision-making process

### Benefits

- 25% reduction in domain management costs
- better understanding of data storage costs, leading to reduction in some cases
- Reduction of data storage costs

“Upland ComSci is fantastic to work with. They’ve become a partner to us and have helped significantly reduce our costs by 8% in end-user support and 25% in domain management.”

– Cheryl Earle, Director of Finance, Administration and Human Resources, IST, University of Alberta

## Unprecedented Visibility Into IT Costs

Upland’s Total IT Financial Management (ITFM) Solution Suite: ComSci, stood out in the marketplace for UAlberta due to its comprehensive software-as-a-service solution that includes a managed service. As well as providing Bill of IT, Service Costing, IT Planning and Cloud Cost Management modules, ComSci’s resources are an extension of IST’s local team.

UAlberta’s existing time-tracking, service-management and HR-management software feed into the ComSci platform, providing timely data and the credibility the Excel tool lacked. Now, 15 people receive service cost reports and labour cost allocation reports for their teams on a monthly basis, and response time to specific client questions is often down to minutes.

The ComSci ITFM solution has given UAlberta’s IST department unprecedented visibility into their IT costs and enabled them to break these down and identify opportunities for improvement. Given the objective of reducing end-user support costs by 11% over two years, IT teams have rationalized their organization, finding solutions like remote support that save travel time costs, and that have allowed them to progress to an 8% reduction in a single year. With another objective of reducing infrastructure management costs by a third, the teams proposed moving nine separate domains they were managing into the central domain, reducing infrastructure requirements.

## Mission Accomplished: IT is a Driver of Value

“Upland ComSci has helped to demonstrate what we were saying – has brought legitimacy – and it’s helped us progress toward demonstrating value and having more informed conversations within IST and with our clients,” Cheryl says.

The 8% reduction in end-user support costs is a prime example of how IST personnel have changed the way they approach their mandate. Without the cost information ComSci provides, the teams had previously come back with suggestions that would save only 2.5-3%.

The conversations with IST’s clients have also changed, becoming more strategic. Visibility into costs has allowed IST to demonstrate to many faculties the value of consolidating their IT domain in the central UofA domain, instead of maintaining resource-intensive separate hardware environments that require regular upgrades. Seeing that it would be no more expensive in the immediate, and help reduce costs longer term, was the proof they needed. IST has achieved a 25% reduction in the per-account cost of maintaining domains. Additionally, better visibility into storage costs enabled one faculty to understand what was being stored and rationalize it, resulting in annual savings of over \$7,000.

“We can now give answers in minutes,” says Cheryl. And that means UAlberta IST is now seen as a driver of value and a valued partner, rather than as a cost centre and drain on faculty resources.



### About Upland Software

Upland Software (Nasdaq: UPLD) is a leader in cloud-based enterprise work management software. Upland provides eight enterprise cloud solution suites that enable more than one million users at over 9,000 accounts to win and engage customers, automate business operations, manage projects and IT costs, and share knowledge throughout the enterprise. All of Upland’s solutions are backed by a 100 percent customer success commitment and the UplandOne platform, which puts customers at the center of everything we do.