

## EXECUTIVE UPDATE

When we set out to plan a new release, one of the first things we do is talk to our clients; what is working well but can be enhanced, where do we go next with a specific functionality, what new features should we explore to address the evolving needs of government. Many people in the industry talk a good game about involving their clients in the direction of their product roadmaps, but I am proud to say that here at CGI we walk the talk. [More »](#)

## PROGRAM UPDATE

### Clients are Moving Forward with AMS Advantage 3.8

Since launching the web-based AMS Advantage® 3 solution in 2003, CGI continues to invest in expanding and simplifying the solution's functional and technical capabilities through in-house development as well as on-site client partnerships. With a combination of client-requested features, software updates, and integration between solutions and technical platforms, AMS Advantage 3.8 will increase efficiency while simplifying ease of use for our state and local government and education clients. Our commitment to driving improvements based on the needs of our clients is just one reason CGI is pleased to introduce AMS Advantage 3.8, the latest version of our built-for-government AMS Advantage ERP solution. Another reason is the positive impact Release 3.8 will have on today's goals for efficiency, accountability and access to information based on their early experiences with the release. [More »](#)

### ERP Challenges and Opportunities in Government

Relief funds are beginning to flow to state and local governments. However, shortages of qualified staff, the high cost of skilled labor, and the inconsistent budgets allocated to periodic events continue to plague organizations. [More »](#)

### It Doesn't Matter how Good we Think we are

At the end of the day, what matters is what you, our clients and our partners, think of CGI, our built-for-government AMS Advantage ERP software and single point of accountability services. And no one can say it better than you. [More »](#)

## CLIENT SUCCESS

### Commonwealth of Massachusetts Captures Overdue Revenue Using Intercepts



A client since 1985, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts upgraded to AMS Advantage 3 Financial Management in May 2004. An early adopter of the web-based release, their strategy included leveraging out-of-the-box, or baseline, functionality to reduce customizations.

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### Collaboration and Performance Tuning Means Savings for City of Cincinnati



An AMS Advantage client since 1989, the City upgraded to the web-based release for Financial Management and Procurement in January 2005. An early adopter, they also enhanced their capabilities by implementing Vendor Self Service.

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### Iowa Solves Adobe Upgrade Issue Using

## Discussion Gateway



A client since 1997, the State of Iowa upgraded to AMS Advantage 3 Financial Management, Procurement and Performance Budgeting in June 2004. As part of the project, they streamlined processes and reduced redundant data entry for greater efficiency and access to accurate information.

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## Letter from Pat Colacicco, Vice President, AMS Advantage Program



When we set out to plan a new release, one of the first things we do is talk to our clients; what is working well but can be enhanced, where do we go next with a specific functionality, what new features should we explore to address the evolving needs of government. Many people in the industry talk a good game about involving their clients in the direction of their product roadmaps, but I am proud to say that here at CGI we walk the talk.

That is just one reason why I am pleased to introduce you to AMS Advantage® 3.8. Since launching the web-based version of AMS Advantage back in 2003, CGI continues to invest in AMS Advantage for the government and education communities. Together we have turned many ideas into baseline features, further strengthening the only ERP solution built specifically for state and local government.

R3.8 raises the bar. With a combination of client-requested features, software updates, and integration between solutions and technical platforms, this release promises to grow efficiency and productivity, all top priorities for our clients in these tough economic times.

Consistent collaboration is another. When we first sat down and started talking about R3.8 two years ago, the first stop was the client community. Whether it was through the Advantage Support Center or your Steering Committee, you let us know loud and clear that this release must focus on efficiency. With each meeting of the Software Change Control Board, CGI's partnership with your client-elected Steering Committee, efficiency was a top priority.

I hope you will agree that the results were worth the effort. Whether you are moving forward with R3.8 or just getting started with planning, there is information here to help you leverage your AMS Advantage ERP investment now and for the future.

- [Lori McClannahan, Steering Committee Chair](#), talks about two important groups, the User Group Steering Committee and Software Change Control Board
- [Clients are Moving Forward with AMS Advantage 3](#), find out why
- [Collaboration and Performance Tuning Means Savings for City of Cincinnati](#), to the tune of 32.5 hours of weekly production operations time
- [Commonwealth of Massachusetts – Captures Overdue Revenue Using Intercepts](#) from AMS Advantage Financial Management
- [Iowa – Solves Adobe Upgrade Issue Using Discussion Gateway](#), are you online yet?
- [What does Built for Government Mean](#) to you, your peers share their thoughts

I hope you take advantage of AMS Advantage 3.8, and the many out-of-the-box features available to your organization for maximizing efficiency. And please take a few minutes to enjoy the Spring weather.

Have a question? Contact Pat today at [Patrick.Colaccico@cgi.com](mailto:Patrick.Colaccico@cgi.com).

## Clients are Moving Forward with AMS Advantage 3.8

Since launching the web-based AMS Advantage® 3 solution in 2003, CGI continues to invest in expanding and simplifying the solution's functional and technical capabilities through in-house development as well as on-site client partnerships. With a combination of client-requested features, software updates, and integration between solutions and technical platforms, AMS Advantage 3.8 will increase efficiency while simplifying ease of use for our state and local government and education clients. Our commitment to driving improvements based on the needs of our clients is just one reason CGI is pleased to introduce AMS Advantage 3.8, the latest version of our built-for-government AMS Advantage ERP solution. Another reason is the positive impact Release 3.8 will have on today's goals for efficiency, accountability and access to information based on their early experiences with the release.

"With every release we add more functionality. With Release 3.8 we also wanted to increase the productivity of the average user by making a quantum leap in the user interface," said Pat Colacicco, CGI Vice President, AMS Advantage Program.

As part of CGI's ongoing efforts to simplify ERP, Release 3.8 incorporates Rich Internet Application (RIA) technology into our enhanced [User Interface](#), for quicker navigation, faster editing and data entry, reduced scrolling, and increased personalization.

Expanded functionality is also a large component of the new release, including the new Grant Lifecycle Management module and AMS infoAdvantage Dashboard. With the [Grant Lifecycle Management](#) module, organizations manage the entire lifecycle centrally, from opportunity to award, using integration with Cost Accounting to manage grant funds, automated reminders to increase collaboration and communication and reporting to analyze performance and comply with ARRA requirements.

Our AMS infoAdvantage Dashboard puts performance measures in the hands of managers using visual, interactive analytics to drive decision-making and increase effectiveness.

"I am pleased to report," said Colacicco "clients such as Baltimore County Schools, Maryland, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, California, New York City and Los Angeles County, California, have requested the release or signed up for an upgrade."

To learn more about how your peers are planning for the upgrade and their progress, sign up to join the user community meeting hosted by Steering Committee representative Kathie Still, Commonwealth of Massachusetts every other month.

"I try to make certain each site on the call has an opportunity to share their experience, ideas and advice," said Still. "And they may also seek assistance from those who have upgraded recently. The focus is on Release 3.8 right now, but those in a 3.7.X upgrade also call in." The minutes from past meetings as well as contact info to receive an invite for future calls are posted on the Discussion Gateway at <https://support.cgi-ams.com/advantage/>.

Take the next step for your organization with the following information:

- Review the AMS Advantage ERP 3.8 [brochure](#): Why Upgrade?
- To join the user community discussion, please contact [kathie.still@state.ma.us](mailto:kathie.still@state.ma.us).
- Familiarize yourself and start planning with CGI's virtual training. Log on to the Learning Forum at [learningforum.cgi.com](http://learningforum.cgi.com) to register for upcoming courses or contact [jeremy.krishnan@cgi.com](mailto:jeremy.krishnan@cgi.com) for more information.
- Contact Paul Dickinson to discuss Upgrade Services, [paul.dickinson@cgi.com](mailto:paul.dickinson@cgi.com).
- Contact Advantage Client Support at 1 800 321-0267.



## ERP Challenges and Opportunities in Government

Relief funds are beginning to flow to state and local governments. However, shortages of qualified staff, the high cost of skilled labor, and the inconsistent budgets allocated to periodic events continue to plague organizations.

Many administrators see rapid ERP modernization as the answer to their efficiency, accountability and visibility challenges. A recent study by Frost & Sullivan surveyed U.S. government ERP executives regarding their challenges and goals.

**Among survey participants, all identified IBM, Oracle and CGI as the top three providers of ERP managed services**

Among those surveyed, including 29 city, 17 county and four states, about one third endorsed a managed services approach to ERP to achieve their goals. They liked the ready access to subject matter expertise, specifically tuned to their unique business and infrastructure requirements, and the consistent month-over-month cost for periodic maintenance. In addition, one of the major benefits identified was support for periodic updates, providing ready access to the most current software releases and enhancements.

The conclusions demonstrate a growing understanding of ERP managed services among state and local government organizations, as well as a firm grasp on the potential benefits and willingness to explore the opportunities that managed services can offer.

This white paper, written by Frost & Sullivan and commissioned by CGI, discusses current ERP operational and management practices, and the challenges and issues faced. [Read](#)

Please contact [william.geer@cgi.com](mailto:william.geer@cgi.com) to discuss your thoughts and challenges and to learn how CGI managed services for AMS Advantage ERP can put your organization on the road to modernization and recovery.

## It Doesn't Matter how Good we Think we are

At the end of the day, what matters is what you, our clients and our partners, think of CGI, our built-for-government AMS Advantage ERP software and single point of accountability services. And no one can say it better than you.

AMS Advantage ERP was built from the ground up specifically for state, local and education organizations, beginning with the City of New York, New York in the 1970's. Since that time, CGI has continued to build on this unique philosophy, working diligently with our client partners to enhance functionality and build new features. But what does "built for government" actually mean?

Recently, we asked a group of your state, local and education peers what "built for government" means to them. Here is what they had to say.

- [John Wallingford, Director of Finance, Prince William County Schools, Virginia](#)
- [Johnna Rogers, Budget Director, Wake County, North Carolina](#)
- [Doug Cotnoir, Director, Statewide ERP Operations, State of Maine](#)

What does "built for government," mean to you? Public Sector ERP Insights is your newsletter, for sharing your ideas, success and best practices with the AMS Advantage client community.

Please contact [cheryl.smith@cgi.com](mailto:cheryl.smith@cgi.com) to share your thoughts with an article, or to join us for our next round of video interviews.

## CGI at State & Local Conferences

You can visit CGI and learn more about our state and local offerings and partnerships at any of our upcoming events. We hope to see you there!

### **NASCIO Midyear Conference**

April 28 – May 1, 2009  
Baltimore, Maryland

### **NGMA Annual Conference**

April 20 – 22, 2009  
Rockville, Maryland

### **AASHTO ISIS**

May 3 – 6, 2009  
Seattle, Washington

### **GFOA Annual Conference**

June 28 – July 1, 2009  
Seattle, Washington

### **NASPE Annual Meeting**

July 2009  
Park City, Utah

### **NASBO Annual Conference**

August 2 – 5, 2009  
Norfolk, Virginia

### **NASACT Annual Conference**

August 15 – 19, 2009  
Dearborn, Michigan

### **NASCIO Annual Conference**

October 25 – 29, 2009  
Austin, Texas

Attending one or more of these conferences? Want to set up a meeting onsite with the CGI team? Please contact CGI at [amsadvantage@cgi.com](mailto:amsadvantage@cgi.com).



## An Update from the AMS Advantage Steering Committee Chair

Welcome to spring! It has been a very busy winter for your representatives serving with the User Group Steering Committee and the Software Change Control Board (SCCB). While these two groups are referred to often, sometimes it may be a challenge to keep track of their purpose and more importantly, their impact. To help clarify, I offer the following summary, which highlights the members and their collaboration with CGI as we work to enhance your AMS Advantage ERP experience.

The Steering Committee consists of client-elected representatives from 12 different sites with designated seats for the following areas:



- Application Administration
- Budget
- Employee Benefits
- Financial Management – Functional (two seats)
- Financial Management- Technical
- Human Resources – Functional
- Human Resources – Technical
- infoAdvantage
- Materials Management
- Payroll – Functional
- Procurement.

Each year, through a vote form you our peers, and represented by each sites Primary Contact, Steering Committee members are voted into office. Throughout the year, the Steering Committee and CGI work on many different initiatives, including playing a key role in planning the CGI Forum content. Representatives also serve the user community through focus groups, monitoring the Discussion Gateway, and leading discussion groups. However, probably the most visible role the Steering Committee has is as members of the Software Change Control Board.

The Software Change Control Board, or SCCB, is a partnership between the Steering Committee and the AMS Advantage Product Managers, focus on developing and maintaining a list of client-submitted enhancements for each release and review concept papers from client-funded enhancements for inclusion in the baseline software.

Each month CGI and the Steering Committee meet to review enhancement requests for all AMS Advantage 3 products, including Application Administration, Performance Budgeting, Financial Management, AMS infoAdvantage and Human Resources Management and Payroll. Enhancements are evaluated on a number of different criteria, including other client comments, usability for the client community, impact on system performance, and development feasibility.

A complete list of these criteria is located online at the Advantage Support Center website under Enhancements: New Enhancement Requests. Refer to link at the bottom of the request form.

As part of the review, enhancements receive a priority, high, medium or low. When it comes time to develop a new release, all approved enhancement requests are reviewed again and ranked. The number is determined by the scope, funding, schedule time and other factors unknown at the time of prioritization. This careful review is performed to ensure, among other things, that the functionality does not already exist, current functionality is left unharmed, and if slightly different functionality may further improve the products.

Perhaps you are wondering why I believe it is important to provide these explanations about the make-up and duties of these two groups. Bottom line, we want you to realize that your voice is heard, and we take action on behalf of your ideas.

While it may be impossible to baseline everything we desire in each release, or realize that we might not see enhancements immediately, it is important for all of us to take the time to enter enhancement requests, comment on enhancement requests and contact Steering Committee representative regarding questions. The more feedback we receive, the better decisions we can make. So please do not hesitate to contact us.

The very first SCCB enhancement priorities were part of the Release 3.7. The SCCB voted on enhancement priorities for Release 3.8 over three years ago, and Release 3.9 priorities are still being determined. While this is not a fast process, it is thorough and each release includes new and improved functionality that is possible only through your feedback, comments and suggestions. For those of you who are already reaching out to us, thank you for your participation in this important process – we appreciate all of the input and guidance provided!

One last note – did you know that each client site has a Primary Contact? Do you know who your Primary Contact is and, what their responsibilities are for your site? In the next quarter, we hope to contact each site's Primary Contact to reemphasize their expectations and responsibilities. So, if you are a Primary Contact, please look for some communication soon.

Have a wonderful spring! Please do not hesitate to contact me, or any member of the Steering Committee members, listed below, with your questions, concerns and ideas.

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## Commonwealth of Massachusetts Captures Overdue Revenue Using Intercepts

A client since 1985, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts upgraded to AMS Advantage 3 Financial Management in May 2004. An early adopter of the web-based release, their strategy included leveraging out-of-the-box, or baseline, functionality to reduce customizations. Following a successful go-live, including a new Labor Cost Management module to replace their legacy Payroll Cost Reporting System, the Commonwealth set their sights on year-over-year improvement. For example, today they are implementing Treasury Accounting, and they continue to play an active role in enhancing AMS Advantage based on the needs of government.

Martin J. Benison, Comptroller of the Commonwealth since 1999, has partnered with the CIO on multiple projects to improve the efficiency of Commonwealth operations including upgrading the enterprise financial management and HR payroll systems along with multiple projects to move citizens, vendors and employees from paper to web based interactions. He currently co-chairs the AGA's Intergovernmental Partnership.

He is Past President of the National Association of State Comptrollers and serves on the Executive Committee of the National Association of State Auditors, Comptrollers and Treasurers. He is a public member of the Professional Ethics Executive Committee of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and Suffolk University's Accounting Business Advisory Board, and is the former chair of the Customer Advisory Board for the United State Treasury's ASAP payment system. Mr. Benison holds a B.A. in Economics from Boston College and a Masters Degree in Public Administration from Harvard University.



The Office of the Comptroller is an independent agency within the Executive Branch, responsible for working with Commonwealth fiscal officers in over 150 departments to ensure the integrity, accountability and efficiency of fiscal operations and the communication of timely financial information to decision makers within the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches, as well as the financial community and general public. They also provide leadership and professional guidance in areas of fiscal policy within the Commonwealth and nationally. Day-to-day activities, as well as long-term initiatives are closely coordinated with other Central Service Agencies, cabinet secretaries and constitutional offices, and include payables, receivables, payroll, accounting and reporting management as well as communications and training.

Recently, Mr. Benison sat down with CGI to talk about their success with AMS Advantage, specifically the use of intercept functionality, and how they are doubling year-over-year fee collections on overdue accounts using internal and external intercepts.

### What are some of the key challenges for the Comptroller?

It is the same for every state: balance accountability with efficiency. For example, back when we first established our relationship with CGI, all spending was processed centrally, but when it came time to bill, you were on your own. Every department had a different system ranging from in-house sophisticated tools to excel spreadsheets. There was no centralized customer file, no billing file, and no standard process to bring bills to closure or take the next step if you could not. That meant labor-intensive processes and little or no accountability.

We worked with CGI to enhance the receivables system that is baseline today. AMS Advantage Financial Management helps us strike the balance between accountability and efficiency that our elected officials demand.

### **What role does intercepts play in supporting that balance?**

Intercepts play a very important role in maintaining the balance. There are people who take responsibility for their bills in a timely fashion. But unfortunately, there are people who do not, for example, corporations that lapse on payments, and students who walk away from repaying student loans. Without a mechanism to carefully track these lapses, they can slip through the cracks.

To remain accountable to our citizens, there is a very specific process in place to dictate the use of intercepts, specifically the timing of billing and reminders. We worked with the Massachusetts legislature for the authority to institute specific steps and automate the process necessary to drive a legitimate overdue bill from delinquency to payment. The Comptroller's Office wrote the regulations that are policy today. If a person or entity does not pay a bill, there is statutory guidance around this and a high level of protection for consumers. For example, we are required to provide the standard 30, 60, 90, and 120-day reminders before we can turn on intercept. If at any time they appeal, the agency must stop the reminder process and complete the appeal process. This means strong protection for our citizens. At this point once turned over to intercept the delinquent receivable is offset against any payment or tax refund being issued to that customer.

### **What role does the Comptroller's Office play?**

The Comptroller's Office stands at the center of the process; we provide the standard processes, the system and the oversight. Although departments are not required to use the centralized system, they must meet the system requirements with equal or better standards.

However, the emphasis is on the oversight. For example, a debt must come through the Comptroller's Office for review before it is "written off," or goes to collection. And at this point, it must be entered into the central system for tracking. This process forces the conversation to ensure we are making the right move for our citizens and the Commonwealth. Because, our customers are also our citizens, we need to ensure payment is easy, and provide appropriate channels for resolution.

### **How does the process work?**

The billing process is now automated, reducing data entry and increasing visibility. Departments can configure this part of the process, the timing of bills and reminders, based on their specific processes, and the application keeps billing until they turn it off. Instead of sending the bill back and forth, the invoice has a coupon that is printed with a scan line. People send their payment to a lock box and the lock box scans the coupon for information that connects to the back end system, AMS Advantage Financial Management. We never have to touch the transaction again. What used to be 50 cents per transaction is now automated. Plus, there is a web site for paying online using bank debit transaction.

The AMS Advantage Financial Management intercept functionality matches the delinquent receivables file with our pay file, identifying an offset of outstanding debt. In addition, we exchange files with our tax department, the Department of Revenue. For example, the Comptroller's delinquent file goes to the Department of Revenue. They match Comptroller information against any tax refunds due to be paid, and intercept against those refunds, remitting intercepted amounts back to the Comptroller's Office. Successful intercepts are applied against outstanding receivables in AMS Advantage Financial Management.

The Department of Revenue then sends me their file of delinquent taxpayers, which we match against our daily vendor payment file and AMS Advantage will intercept from vendor payments on behalf of the Department of Revenue where there is a match on TIN. AMS Advantage then creates a file of intercepted debt which is sent to the Department of Revenue. All of the accounting necessary to net the payment and credit intercepted amounts to the Department of Revenue are accomplished through the automated process.

### **What is happening recently with intercepts?**

Once we got internal intercepts up and running, internal to department responsibilities, we launched external intercepts. External intercepts are available to other parts of the Commonwealth, for example, Medicare, public defense, child care, abandoned property, as well as our state colleges and universities.

Think of it like a "bus hub," where you can get on and off depending on your needs. The centralized functionality is there.

### What are the results?

Last year we collected \$7.3 million in intercepts, and about half of that was on behalf of the colleges. Here are some statistics:

State Fiscal Year	Total Intercepts accomplished	Intercepts accomplished on behalf of Higher Education	Total Fees Collected
FY 2005	\$ 3,692,000	\$ 1,710,000	\$ 152,370
FY 2006	\$ 5,447,000	\$ 3,227,000	\$ 215,610
FY 2007	\$ 5,803,000	\$ 3,719,000	\$ 231,060
FY 2008	\$ 7,279,000	\$ 4,212,000	\$ 303,900

That is revenue, so it returns to where it was supposed to go in the first place, the bottom line, or a specific agency or specialized purpose. Plus there is a \$15 fee for processing that goes into an account for further improvements to revenue collection.

### What are the next steps for the Commonwealth?

Right now we are implementing Treasury Accounting which will automate detailed treasury and debt/investment management procedures. In addition to automation, this will integrate and improve management of investment, debt, and cash portfolios. We are also looking at Release 3.8 to determine the optimal time for our next upgrade.

Have a question for Martin on how intercepts is working for the Commonwealth? Contact Martin at [martin.benison@state.ma.us](mailto:martin.benison@state.ma.us). To learn more about intercepts and how they can help your organization address the debt challenge, contact CGI at [amsadvantage@cgi.com](mailto:amsadvantage@cgi.com).



## Collaboration and Performance Tuning Means Savings for City of Cincinnati

An AMS Advantage client since 1989, the City upgraded to the web-based release for Financial Management and Procurement in January 2005. An early adopter, they also enhanced their capabilities by implementing Vendor Self Service. Since that time, the City has reduced costs associated with vendor maintenance and publishing solicitations, and today they are moving forward with submitting bids online.

About six months ago, the City recognized an issue with their SA reports; they were running much longer than expected, and longer than they were running before even though there had been no changes to the system.



Recently, Bruce House and Dave Criddle from city of Cincinnati shared the details of the issue, including how the collaboration with Client Support helped reduce run times and improve user satisfaction.

**Bruce House** is the Computer System Analyst for AMS Advantage, working with the Regional Computer Center for the City. With them now for 14+ years, Bruce started his city government career in law enforcement with the Hamilton County Law Enforcement Group (CLEAR), working on the Automated Fingerprint Information System (AFIS) where he also became FBI certified as a fingerprint examiner. Bruce joined the RCC Cincinnati Financial Systems department of RCC in 2000 because of his IBM and PC technical background. Bruce supports the AMS Advantage Financial (CFS) and Vendor Self Service (VSS) systems. Bruce installed EFT for the City and supports the CFS batch nightly cycle production schedules and works closely with his supervisor, Dave Criddle, to maintain these systems.

**Dave Criddle** is a 16-year veteran with the City, beginning with his work for the Recreation Department in 1993. There he worked on systems to automate and track training and certification for employees. Dave moved to Cincinnati Financial Systems in 1995 to support AMS Advantage 2.2, building reports and working with Bruce in the upgrade to the Web-based R3. Today he supervises the RCC Cincinnati Financial Systems department for the City, including AMS Advantage, VSS, and Web Focus but still steps in and dusts off his technical expertise "hat" when the phone rings.

### Can you walk us through the original issue?

**Dave:** Performance Tuning was already on the plan. With budget reductions, we were looking at reduced staffing time for our weekend operators. Our goal was to reduce the run time of our SA jobs so they complete within our eight-hour shift window for all CFS nightly processing. This would eliminate the need to staff the computer room over the weekend to run our SA jobs.

**Bruce:** We wanted to improve our Systems Assurance batch job efficiency and globally reduce system run times. When reorganizing the ledger summarization, we could not get SA1 to complete, and our priorities shifted quickly. It had always run longer than expected, and was increasing fast, but at 80 hours our users were seeing performance problems, and of course, we were running into scheduling problems. For example, we could not take the Sunday backup because SA1 was still



running. Extended SA run times were threatening to push batch nightly cycle schedules into next day online business.

### **What was your next step?**

**Bruce:** We called Client Support. We have a great working relationship with them, whether it is on the phone or in an application share to research a problem, to look into our system or research the code. They are smart, fun people to work with. They always bring their best to the table, their expertise and their problem-solving skills. I enjoy collaborating, researching, and solving issues with the CSG folks.

**Dave:** I guess I am a sucker for punishment, but I love an IT challenge. I love digging into the details and learning something new every day. The CSG folks love it too; I guess that is why they like the job. They are right there next to us digging. Problem solving with them is a pleasure.

**Bruce:** Plus the bi-weekly issue reviews we started last year keep us on track; we review all of the issues at once, the status and next steps. This process helps to keep track of an issue, and reviewing issues with CSG helps solve system issues faster and aids in moving more efficiently toward resolution.

### **Can you describe the collaboration effort on this issue?**

**Dave:** There were so many people who helped – I want to thank them all!

**Bruce:** This is not the Oscars, Dave! We started working on SA1 with Angela Liberto, who brought in other folks like Laura Mattox, the guru of SA jobs. Then Zhenya Lawrence, Cheryl King, Callyann Roller, and Stephanie Jurenko jumped in. We put our heads together, and reorganized the SA BUD ledger and made some parameter changes to limit the block size. We also added a multi-thread spawn job so we could run SA1 and SA2 simultaneously. We identified three defects, one in SA02 balancing, and another in the ledger rebuild, and a third in the SA1 & SA2 chain job linkage. The SA1 tuning successes led us to seek SA2, SA4 and SA9 tuning opportunities. Each tuning success widened the project focus and eventually encompassed identification and coordination of over nine separate technical issues with CSG.

**Dave:** Then Tim Waggoner joined us so he could look at the AIX/Oracle side of things, and he brought Keerthi Mohan, Mark Ross, and Gaurav Gosar. At one point, we were watching the Versata job monitor, looking for when SA1 would pause – asking ourselves, why was the SA1 job spending so much time in the detail ledgers?

**Bruce:** Turned out, the ledger rebuild job was using the date of the current fiscal year versus the startup year for the journal history so the rebuild was failing to summarize properly. So one by one, we went through each SA job, monitoring it, identifying any issues, and fixing them. The positive results began surpassing our expectations and led to AIX and Oracle tuning benefits as well.

**Dave:** Like SA1. It was running for fourteen hours because it was reading the entire database, not just the summarized entries. I think that is when someone from Product Engineering joined us, a person who actually wrote the SA jobs – it was as if God had joined the call. Turned out to be Trey McClendon! We explained what we wanted to change and he showed us where to make the change in the code.

**Bruce:** We were scrambling to think up what other questions we should ask while we had him on the phone!

**Dave:** Goes to show that it is not just CSG helping us, it is everyone at CGI.

### **What are the benefits today?**

**Dave:** This has been a six month effort involving tuning of Oracle, AIX and AMS Advantage. The result is an incredible timesaving: approximately 30.55 weeks of eight hour shifts annually. That is a whopping 1690 hours annually. Now our batch schedules can be run in normal five day, eight hour nightly shifts.

**Bruce:** Let me give you some details of the savings we've achieved with CSG's teamwork:

- We reduced CFS batch run times from 28.5 of elapsed weekly run time in June of 2008 to five hours of elapsed weekly run time in February 2009. That is a savings of 32.5 hours of weekly production operations time.
- Weekly SA incremental mode runs have gone from 1.5 to .5 hours. That is an additional NCP savings of one hour per night.
- Overall, we significantly reduced the batch processing times for SA1, SA2, SA4, and SA9.

**Dave:** These changes translate into real savings for us in wages and reduced operating costs. They mean we have eliminated batch schedules from the weekends so we are operating more efficiently with today's budget.

**Bruce:** An unexpected bonus is the improvement in overall performance for our users. For example, our NCP, Year End, Annual Close and large bi-weekly City payroll imports are all now running significantly faster and are no longer affecting daytime online performance. We still have some issues to wrap-up, but once that is complete, we expect to reduce SA1 by another 50 percent, another 65 hours saved annually.

### **What are the next steps for the City?**

**Bruce:** Keerthi was a wonderful resource and recommended that we explore running a second (dual) job manager to enhance our batch processing, which will mirror our production online clone configuration in support of the Multi-Thread Spawn for the SA1 improvements.

**Dave:** We were an early adopter for Vendor Self Service, and we have seen some great savings there. Now we are ready to move forward with enhancing electronic EFTs and solicitations. Right now EFTs automate for CTX formats and we post bids for vendors to download for a fee. We are also getting to know our neighbors at the commonwealth of Kentucky, who run AMS Advantage Financial Management. The project manager there, George Schwartztrauber, and his staff have offered some CGI resources. The Commonwealth has done something similar so there is great experience and expertise we can leverage.

### ***An update since meeting:***

#### **Final project notes**

Since this interview, the City has perfected the SA01 Full Mode Multi-Spawn Chain Job recommended by Keerthi Mohan. The Multi-Thread Spawn, with a dual multi-thread setting, gave the results Keerthi forecasted with a successful overall chain job runtime of 160 minutes. This represents a chain job run timesavings of 87 minutes or almost 1.5 hrs over the current single thread SA01 Full Mode version currently in production. "It is really rewarding to see the SA01 Mutli-Thread Spawn job working so well," said House.

"This latest achievement represents real savings of approximately 4,680 minutes a year or almost another two full weeks of labor time shaved off of our previous noteworthy savings for our Regional Computer Center," said Criddle.

In addition, the City's SA04 "Earliest Date Parm" range was recently revised to January 1, 2009 and they are now periodically moving this date parm setting forward to prevent unnecessary reprocessing of SA04 history based on CGI recommendations. Testing with this regular date parameter adjustment has again reduced SA4 run time from one hour and 50 minutes to 21 minutes. "This is another batch job savings of 4,680 minutes a year or 9,360 total for almost a full month of labor and resource savings per year between these two latest tuning achievements," continued Criddle.

#### **What are the total benefits today after the wrap up of all tuning?**

"Total Systems Assurance savings from 28.5 hours per week, back in July of 2008, reduced to approxi- mately 3.5 hours per week for SA Full Mode and .75 hours for SA Incremental Mode. That translates to 32.5 weeks (of five, eight hour shifts) of operator processing and computer resource

time saved annually" said House. "With these results, the City is ready to implement their original plan to retrofit the weekend batch (NCP) processing cycles into our weekly NCP schedules thus eliminating weekend operations schedules."

"Needless to say we are extremely happy with the proven results of the project including the new SA01 Multi-Spawn Chain Job software improvement for our production batch Nightly Cycle Processing (NCP)," said Criddle, "and expect Keerthi Mohan will share our positive feelings. Her continued cooperation, support, and technical assistance have been highly valued by us. Keerthi has really partnered with us to help us achieve our goals and is always a pleasure to work with."

For questions contact Bruce or Dave at [bruce.house@cincinnati-oh.gov](mailto:bruce.house@cincinnati-oh.gov) and [dave.criddle@cincinnati-oh.gov](mailto:dave.criddle@cincinnati-oh.gov). Read up on the issue on the [Advantage Support Center web site](#). Ready to start your Performance Tuning efforts? Contact Advantage Client Support at 1 800 321-0267.

## Iowa Solves Adobe Upgrade Issue Using Discussion Gateway

A client since 1997, the State of Iowa upgraded to AMS Advantage 3 Financial Management, Procurement and Performance Budgeting in June 2004. As part of the project, they streamlined processes and reduced redundant data entry for greater efficiency and access to accurate information. In June 2008, they went live with Release 3.7.0.2.

Dharmesh Patel has been working with AMS Advantage Financial Management and Vendor Self Service for many years, going back to his days working on baseline releases and customizations. He became an expert working with CGI on the New York City project. Today he works for the State as an Information Technology Specialist.

Dharmesh took some time from his busy schedule this month to talk to CGI about a recent connection he made online with the Discussion Gateway.



### What were you working on?

We were upgrading Adobe from 5.5 to 5.6. After installation of Adobe Designer, we noticed overwriting, three or four extra pages with the first one blank followed by the form header. Sometimes the header content repeated as well. We tried a few things here, with no success, so I opened an issue with the Client Support Group (CSG).

### What did you think was the issue?

At one point, I was thinking that maybe our form designs had some inherent flaw we just ignored in Release 5.5, and only popped-up with Release 5.6. I was worried that we might have to redesign all of our 80+ forms. While CSG researched the issue, Lori McClannahan recommended I post a question on the Discussion Gateway to see if anyone out there in the client community was experiencing the same or a similar issue.

### What did you find on the Discussion Gateway?

I started browsing and found an existing thread called "Upgrading from Adobe 5.5 to 5.6." So, I added my question there and watched for a response. A few weeks later, Steven Cain from the city of Norfolk, Virginia, who had originated the thread, replied saying they were able to resolve the issue with the help of CSG and Adobe.

### What was the issue?

Basically, a parameter '-afxon' was missing in the print options in the Designer. Making that change eliminated the first blank page and the overwriting issues. Yet we still had one or more extra pages and the .pdf content was scattered across those extra pages.

### What happened next?

Meanwhile, Lori learned that Columbus Consolidated Government, Georgia also did an upgrade to Release 5.6. So she asked her friend Jackie Holland and he suggested we change the parameter value of 'DiscardUnknownFields' from 'Yes' to 'No' in the JFMERGE.INI file. We installed the Adobe Central Pro server, modified the file and, hooray, we were all set with Adobe 5.6! We really appreciate the valuable suggestions from Steve and Jackie, without them, the upgrade would have taken even longer.

### **Was this your first time on the Discussion Gateway?**

Yes, it was the first time I tried to use the Discussion Gateway – and it was a great experience and it really worked out well for me. It also shows that people are willing and always ready to respond and help. The Gateway serves as a background for communication among the client community – without being there, it would have been difficult to ask my question, and receive a timely response, from the broader group.

### **What would you like to tell others about the Discussion Gateway?**

I am sure many clients have done upgrades without issues, but when there is one, they should check out the Gateway. Otherwise, they will not know that there is potentially a corresponding discussion going on with other clients. Everyone should sign up for the watch lists based on their area of interest and/or work area. You may get a few extra emails, but it keeps you in the loop and the advantage of quicker response is even greater.

Have a question for Dharmesh? Contact him at [dharmesh.patel@iowa.gov](mailto:dharmesh.patel@iowa.gov) or look for him on the Discussion Gateway. Ready to join the community online? Log on to the Advantage Support Center website at <https://support.cgi-ams.com/advantage/> and sign up for the Discussion Gateway today!

## AMS Advantage Client News

Whether it is streamlining business processes, taking advantage of new functionality or just staying current on maintenance, one thing is clear: the AMS Advantage client community continues to transform.

Congratulations to the following CGI clients that have recently gone live with AMS Advantage 3:

- City of Cleveland, Ohio went live with Sympro Investment Management in January 2009.
- Monterey County, California went live with AMS Advantage Performance Budgeting in January 2009, followed by AMS Advantage Learning and Sympro Investment in March 2009.
- City of Springfield, Illinois went live with AMS Advantage Recruiting in March 2009, followed by AMS Advantage Financial Management and Maximo in February 2009.
- City of Midland, Texas went live with AMS Advantage Human Resources Management/Payroll in April 2009.
- Los Angeles County, California went live with AMS Advantage Talent Management in January 2009, followed by sixteen additional departments in February, twelve in March and six in April 2009.

Congratulations to the following CGI clients that have recently upgraded:

- City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii upgraded AMS Advantage Financial Management and HRM from 3.6.0.2 to 3.7.0.2 in February 2009.
- Northern Arizona University, Arizona upgraded from AMS Advantage Financial Management 3.5.1.2 to 3.7.0.2 in April 2009.

Do you have news to share? Contact Cheryl Smith at [Cheryl.Smith@cgi.com](mailto:Cheryl.Smith@cgi.com).