

CASE STUDY:

HOW DC CENTRAL KITCHEN SAVED TIME AND IMPROVED THEIR GRANT REPORTING

Industry: Nonprofit/Service

APPS USED

- Healthy Corners Invoice
- Product Delivery Confirmation
- Inventory Form

HIGHLIGHTS

- Streamlined backend process
- Easier grant reporting
- Freedom for creative problem solving

BACKGROUND

[DC Central Kitchen](#) is a major non-profit in the DC area. They're a leader in reducing hunger with recycled food, training unemployed adults for culinary careers, serving healthy school meals, and rebuilding urban food systems through social enterprise. They serve 10,000 meals a day. Through their Culinary Job Training program (CJT) they estimate that for every dollar spent on CJT, [they reinvest \\$3.50](#) into DC in saved taxed dollars and new tax revenue.

In their efforts to reach out and aid the DC community, DC Central Kitchen also battles the problem of food deserts. Their program, [Healthy Corners](#), seeks to provide access to affordable produce to low income areas. With only local corner stores, these consumers don't have the opportunity to buy fruits and vegetables. These stores can't buy from wholesale distributors who ask for large quantity sales.

Thus, DC Central Kitchen has set up a program to provide corner stores wholesale priced produce in limited volumes. This partnership provides consumers more access to fresh produce at a limited risk for the small corner stores.

Like most non-profits, DC Central Kitchen started with paper processes. When working with these corner stores, determining their orders, drop offs, and other details were done with paper forms, emails and phone calls. Not only was

this disparate information hard to organize, but also created opportunities for miscommunication.

At times these errors caused delays in store orders and slowed down their work with corner stores. With a grant from DC government, miscommunication and missing information made their weekly grant reporting difficult as well.

DC Central Kitchen needed a system that was easier to use, faster and better organized.

SOLUTION & RESULTS

In January 2014 DC Central Kitchen switched to Canvas, the global leader in mobile apps for business. DC Central Kitchen found the transition almost seamless. With their free trial, they received full support from Canvas as they moved from paper to mobile apps.

Each and every account gets a dedicated senior mobile app consultant. Together with their consultant, DC Central Kitchen was able to explain what they wanted and to create a mobile experience for their unique needs.

DC Central Kitchen found itself in the same position thousands of Canvas customers have; the Canvas platform—with 14,000+ customizable mobile apps, the app builder and real-time app management—strengthened their internal processes.

With eight users on tablets, DC Central Kitchen has found real, measurable results by implementing Canvas. These include:

Streamlined Processes

Previously, DC Central Kitchen struggled to gather the necessary information. At the beginning of the week, store owners would call in their orders. An employee would take it down and then have to send it to the procurement manager. With various steps, it slowed down the procurement manager's work.

In addition, drivers would take down delivery confirmations on paper. It could be hours before the drivers returned to the office with these confirmations. Then, employees had to spend additional time entering these forms into their system.

With Canvas, both of these processes have been dramatically streamlined. Delivery confirmation as well as order information are collect on-site. Every finished form goes straight to the cloud. No longer do employees need to spend additional time on data entry.

DC Central Kitchen has customized it's apps for even faster processes. The store orders are emailed directly to the procurement manager. Bills go to the accounting department

in real-time. This automation reduces opportunity for human error as well as makes orders easier and faster.

What once required hours of additional work can now be accessed by the DC Central Kitchen team in seconds.

Faster Grant Reporting

Previously, DC Central Kitchen had a time consuming process to gather information for grant reporting. They'd have to set up phone calls, or meetings to learn about inventory levels, and what consumers were buying. This process required additional time and work from an already busy non-profit staff and small business owners.

Today, much of this information can be gathered on site during product deliveries. At the local businesses, DC Central kitchen asks the necessary grant reporting questions. Not only does using Canvas reduce the number of meetings, but also gives DC Central Kitchen real time information via the cloud.

In addition, DC Central Kitchen needs demographic information on the customers of these local stores. With Canvas, DC Central Kitchen easily interviews customers and local residents at Healthy Corners kick off events. At these events, DC Central Kitchen demonstrates ways to cook with fresh produce, and provide customers more information about the program and how to utilize it fully.

Employees attend with tablets, so they can take down information quickly at events and have it stored in the cloud immediately. No filing or data entry, no messy handwritten notes, just demographic information quickly taken down in the field and useable at the office.

Time for Creative Problem Solving

Nonprofits, [often having fewer resources than businesses](#), can struggle to get everything done. For DC Central Kitchen, switching to Canvas has created an amazing new resource for their staff: time. Streamlined processes free up hours once spent on administrative processes.

Now the Healthy Corners team can spend that time expanding their program in new and exciting ways. For Janell Walker, Director of Nutrition and Community Outreach, this is important.

She says, “People can be more creative when they have more time. Time crunches keep you from being creative and finding solutions to problems. Turning to a digital application allows people to be more responsive and more efficient in their work.”

Flexibility to Meet Evolving Business Needs

As a cloud-based, mobile platform combined with an easy-to-use mobile app builder, Canvas provides DC Central Kitchen the flexibility to quickly add new features and functionality to any of their mobile apps. As needs evolve and change, Canvas apps can be updated easily, with no programming required.

For instance, as DC Central Kitchen’s grant requirements change, they can easily go into their Canvas account and simply update their report app to reflect new questions. Within seconds, these changes will be updated for all their users. This allows for an easy transition and can be done by anyone in the office.

Other mobile app alternatives make this process cumbersome or costly, weakening the effectiveness of their platforms. With Canvas it is a frictionless process at no additional cost.

Today, DC Central Kitchen’s Healthy Corners program continues to go strong. With more than 50 stores participating, they have enjoyed \$40,000 in annual sales of healthy food options. DC Central Kitchen plans on helping even more low income residents enjoy access to great food options. Because of efficient and streamlined information gathering, they can continue to focus on creative solutions for DC and beyond.