How Xavier University evolved its eProcurement with Unimarket.

An eProcurement success story

XAVIER UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1831, Xavier University is the oldest Catholic college in Ohio and regularly ranks among America's best universities.

Location: Cincinnati, Ohio

Enrollment: 7,000

ERP: Ellucian Banner

Xavier University had been using eProcurement for years, but its solution was stagnating and the institution couldn't take advantage of the latest advancements. When its contract was up for renewal, Xavier considered several options and decided to partner with Unimarket.

With four colleges spread across its 205-acre campus, Xavier employs a decentralized purchasing model while still maintaining oversight with spend going through its eProcurement platform.

While the functionality of its original eProcurement solution made it a good match at first, Xavier wasn't able to introduce many new features during its contract period. Following an internal review, it was decided it was time for a change.

Room for improvement

In 2009, John Mercer, Executive Director of Central Procurement and Accounts Payable, joined the Xavier team. John helped streamline processes by introducing eProcurement and his procurement team has been focused on optimizing and improving processes ever since.

"We were kind of stuck where we'd started with eProcurement for various reasons. We struggled to expand from our entry-level platform, even though there were obvious efficiencies available in the supplier management, invoicing, contracts, and expense management spaces," says John.

"When new features become available and new technology surfaces, I want to be able to integrate those at Xavier. We had been struggling with that for both internal and external reasons with our prior contract."

Once again, John and his team went to market for an eProcurement solution. They reviewed a range of providers, looking at everything from functionality to cost. Unimarket

stood out in all areas, but what stood out most was the solution provider's commitment to close client partnerships.

"In terms of functionality, Unimarket was equivalent or better in areas that were important to us. It also delivered a significant cost-saving, which freed up budget for other purposes. But what really sold us on Unimarket was that we felt we would have a much stronger and more collaborative working relationship that would enable future expansion," explains John.

Making the transition

John admits there was apprehension about switching eProcurement solution providers, but a smooth implementation and transition period eased those concerns.

"They immediately made us feel comfortable. It was clear they had the expertise and that we were in good hands," says John.

"We're a tough customer. We'd been using the same system for 10 years and we had strong opinions about what worked for us. Unimarket listened and worked within our framework while also challenging us and introducing new concepts. We always felt like we were dealing with the most experienced people for the job."

John was impressed by the straightforward implementation process and the proficiency of the Unimarket team.

"We had a smooth technical implementation and our IT team felt comfortable with their counterparts at Unimarket."

Ready for the future

Since making the upgrade, Xavier has taken advantage of a new range of eProcurement capabilities.

The university now benefits from features including contract management and expense management. It also has greater control and visibility into spend, especially in relation to budgets. "The transition to Unimarket gave us the opportunity to increase spend through eProcurement and we now have almost all supplier spend going through the platform," says John.

Improved reporting and budget reconciliation functionality also help streamline the university's end-of-year activities. "We can now start the year-end process early — something we weren't able to do beforehand. That's a big feature that helps our end-users prepare for the start of a new fiscal year."

Since go-live, Xavier has already expanded the functionality of its eProcurement setup by adding Unimarket Payments. This enhancement will allow the university to automate and simplify the entire payments process, significantly reducing manual effort and minimizing risk.

With Unimarket Payments, the institution will no longer have to print or mail checks or deal with as many supplier maintenance questions or problems, and many suppliers will be transitioned to streamlined electronic payment methods, such as ACH or virtual card.

A strategic eProcurement partnership

John says the biggest change since moving to Unimarket has been the level of strategic support and collaboration. Unimarket and Xavier are in frequent contact and the teams regularly meet to look at what can be changed or improved to create even better procurement outcomes.

"With Unimarket, there's an eagerness to continually evolve and improve. That's exactly what we were looking for in our eProcurement partner.

"We talk through what's been working well and where we could get more efficiencies from the system. Our account manager is always responsive and pulls in other resources when needed," says John.

"Their consistency allows for seamless communication and information flow. I've been fortunate that my team has always been stable, and in our experience, it's been the same with Unimarket," he concludes.

"With Unimarket, there's an eagerness to continually evolve and improve. That's exactly what we were looking for in our eProcurement partner."

John Mercer, Executive Director of Central Procurement and Accounts Payable at Xavier University.

Results

- Automation and simplification of supplier payments

- Straightforward and stress-free implementation

- A more cost-effective eProcurement solution

- The introduction of new functionality like contract management and expenses management

- A close eProcurement partnership

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