

# ERP + GovCloud Give Offset Strategic Services the Weapons to Conquer Prime Contractor Role, Compliance and Data Thieves

## CASE STUDY

As the chief technology officer for a small company whose project workload and staff were about to become much larger, Lloyd Sanders of Offset Strategic Services (OSS) knew it was time for the government contracting firm to find an enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution powerful enough to scale with it — and secure enough to protect the highly sensitive data the firm handles in its work on defense-related projects.

“We needed to get an ERP system in place while we were still small and didn’t have a lot of contracts,” he explains, “because trying to implement ERP after we’d won multiple new contracts, plus all the tasks they entail, would be an order of magnitude more complex.”

Not just any ERP product would do, Sanders knew. It had to come with specific capabilities that would enable OSS to:

- **Move away from paper-intensive manual processes to a largely paperless operation.** With an influx of people, project-related tasks and data now imminent after the firm landed new work, it urgently needed a secure, highly automated and scalable project-based system to manage accounting and other key business functions during the coming growth spurt.
- **Protect sensitive data from hackers.** “Peer threats like China are very good at stealing data, and the small business is their prey,” says Sanders. Thus the firm needed stronger security than the legacy commercial-based clouds systems it had been using to house its data.
- **Move on from legacy small business accounting software to better equip the firm to handle prime contractor and compliance responsibilities.** “You really want an accounting system that gives government auditors confidence you can manage as a prime contractor,” he says. “Our previous solution was not the solution for our future oks.”

With a major growth spurt on the horizon, firm leaders knew they had to move quickly but prudently to find an ERP solution to replace their legacy software and the outsource accounting firm on which they were relying.



## ABOUT OFFSET STRATEGIC SERVICES

*Founded in 2017, Offset Strategic Services is a service-disabled veteran-owned small business (SDVOSB) that provides engineering services chiefly to the U.S. Department of Defense and its military operations. The firm specializes in weapons system technology and services for war fighters.*

*Based in Huntsville, Ala., it currently employs close to 50 people, with pending projects that could more than double that number. It has won prime contracts for operations and logistics, training services, and prototype development, with capabilities that include International Standard Organization (ISO) 9001: 2015 Registration, Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) Level III Program Management, Army Certified Lean Six Sigma Green & Black Belt, DFARS CYBER National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) 800-171 Compliance, and use of Government Cloud Computing High (GCC HIGH) for security of controlled unclassified information (CUI).*



## THE SOLUTION FOR OSS

Sanders and the OSS leadership team cast a wide net in their ERP search, evaluating more than 10 systems. Deltek products were not among those considered, he notes, because of their reputation for drawn-out, difficult implementations. “I didn’t want to live that experience.”

Unanet ERP GovCon emerged as the clear choice. “We all had our requirements. We evaluated the options and came to the conclusion that Unanet is the best product for us.”

A few factors gave Unanet an advantage of other systems:

- **Data security. OSS could take advantage of GovCloud, an optional (and increasingly popular) feature with** Unanet ERP GovCon that provides a cloud-based environment from Amazon Web Services designed and certified by the government under FISMA to the FedRamp high-impact level for systems holding sensitive data and supporting regulated workloads.
- **An implementation support team well-versed in moving GovCon firms to the cloud.** With step-by-step guidance from the Unanet support team, our migration to Unanet’s secure GovCloud took “about an hour” and SSO (single sign-on) set-up was a breeze. “They made the process painless for us,” Sanders says of the Unanet team.
- **Furthering the firm’s paperless goals.** Implementing Unanet ERP GovCon would mean significantly less paper-shuffling, a major security upgrade that also comes with equally major sustainability benefits.
- **Easy-to-visualize business insights.** Unanet’s customizable dashboards would give firm decision-makers easy-to-understand, real-time insights from across the business.



## IMPACT

OSS went live with Unanet ERP GovCon in January 2021 following a lightning-fast implementation. “Flash to bang in less than two weeks. It was fantastic,” says Sanders. Now, armed with an ERP system befitting a rapidly growing, DOD-focused government contracting firm, OSS.

**1. Has newfound peace of mind because data is protected in GovCloud rather than at-risk in paper-intensive processes and a less secure environment.**

“Not having to secure paper [that bears sensitive information] or worry about who has copies of what documents brings peace of mind,” Sanders says. “Instead of physically moving sensitive documents, we can just send them via a link.”

**2. Is well armed to meet all its prime contractor responsibilities.**

Managing and monitoring all the moving parts associated with multiple projects is now a straightforward undertaking. “If you want to grow into a prime government contractor and have subcontractors, you really need a mature ERP system,” he observes.

**3. Is poised to gain a competitive edge over other GovCons by fulfilling DCAA, CMMC and other compliance responsibilities.**

With a firm handle on all its data, OSS is now eminently prepared not only for a DCAA audit, but to pursue CMMC certification, which it plans to do as soon as possible, according to Sanders. “It’s a competitive advantage,” he asserts, “for us to be able to say to clients and prospects, ‘We’re not going to lose your data. We are just as secure as you guys are.’” Having an ERP system hosted in a secure environment like GovCloud is a

must to pass the CMMC assessment, he adds. “Being on a FedRAMP cloud, with the ERP and accounting system we’re using now, puts auditors and examiners at ease. I’m very confident that we will get CMMC certification, and that’s because we’re on GovCloud. This is the new cost of doing business with DOD. If a firm can’t get CMMC-certified, it will be moved off the defense industrial base.”

**4. Is a streamlined, paperless operation.**

Going digital has reduced the risk exposure and human error associated with paper-intensive processes.

**5. Has gained cost certainty and relieved itself of IT headaches.**

Moving to the cloud has enabled OSS to offload risk, cost and maintenance responsibilities. “We can now very predictably forecast what our per-person costs are going to be,” Sanders says. “It’s really just about licensing costs now. There’s no overhead for additional IT personnel or having to perform daily maintenance on all that infrastructure. There’s definitely cost-reduction in going to the cloud because now we’re letting the infrastructure experts deal with all that.”

**6. Is building in-house accounting expertise.**

No more outsourced accounting functions. Instead, with a new accountant on staff, the firm is building accounting as a core competency.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

The positive momentum created by a fast, easy implementation with Unanet ERP GovCon has carried over for Offset Strategic Services, thanks in large part to the firm:

- 1. Embracing a cloud solution that meets the heightened security standards of government contractors.**

Being able to store all our ERP data in a FedRamp High environment like Unanet's GovCloud is critical to meeting cybersecurity standards and fulfilling the weighty compliance responsibilities of a DOD prime contractor.

- 2. Committing to go paperless.**

Data is more secure and accessible, and less prone to human error, as a result of shifting away from paper-intensive workflows, to largely automated, fully integrated digital processes for storing, transferring and managing information.

- 3. Not settling for a slow implementation timeline.**

GovCon firms with a sense of urgency and an aggressive ERP implementation timeline to match shouldn't have to wait months or even years for a process that, as Unanet and OSS demonstrated, can be completed in a matter of weeks.

**Now, with more than 18 months' experience under the new ERP solution, "We're big believers in Unanet ERP GovCon," Sanders says enthusiastically. "We're using it because we believe in it as an ERP, and because security is such a big concern, not just for us but for our partners and all the people we do business with."**

## Where Information Means Insight

Unanet is a leading provider of ERP and CRM solutions purpose-built for Government Contractors, A/E, and Professional Services. More than 3,200 project-driven organizations depend on Unanet to turn their information into actionable insights, drive better decisionmaking, and nurture business growth.

