Wolters Kluwer TeamMate

Chatham County Georgia: Focusing on what matters the most

Historic **Chatham County** is the 5th oldest county in the State of Georgia (and the largest county outside of the Atlanta metropolitan area). Often described as a riverfront community, Chatham County takes great pride in partnering with its citizens and collaborating with a diverse array of businesses, universities, and other government entities. Operating under the Commission-Manager form of local government, Chatham County has roughly 2,000 team members working across more than 35 departments and is home to the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), St. Joseph's/Candler Health Center, and the revered Army 3rd Infantry Division and affiliated military units of Hunter Army Airfield.

TeamMate recently had the opportunity to speak with Jeannie Alday (CIA, CISA, CFE, CPCU, CRMA, CFSA, CGAP), Director of Internal Audit at Chatham County, GA Government, to learn more about her experiences using TeamMate+ and how it has enhanced her audit journey.

Career background and technical evolution

TeamMate: Can you tell us more about your background, your role, and your overall experience within the industry?

Jeannie Alday: I've spent 41 years in internal audit—25 years in the banking industry, approximately 6–7 years in the insurance industry, and now close to 9 years within local government after transitioning to Chatham County. My educational background includes an initial degree that focused on Management Information Systems. I added to that with a second degree in Accounting and then eventually ended up in internal audit as a career path based on the combination of my skillsets.

In the early 2000s I was introduced to database management and started building my own audit processes, primarily because the smaller audit teams that I was working with could not afford the commercial tools that were available. I'd go to conferences, see the various audit management systems that were available, and then come back and program the needed features and functionality myself. Over time and out of necessity, I built a robust audit management system by mimicking those features that I would see being used by others in the industry.

The problem is that I'm the only one on our team that has that knowledge and experience with this programming. And with retirement on the horizon, I want to be able to leave the department with a scalable, modern solution that we can grow with; one that will provide a more sophisticated form of audit technology. Although the audit system that I've developed over the years is powerful and extremely robust for an Access database, it's no longer sustainable and doesn't meet the leading-edge requirements that we were looking for.

Transitioning to TeamMate+: Motivations, challenges, and opportunities

TeamMate: What drove your decision to move to a new system—was it functionality, affordability, or something else?

Jeannie Alday: Functionality was definitely a key decision when it came to choosing and implementing TeamMate+. It's also important to note that, as a government agency, any expense over $25,000 is required to go through a formal bidding process. As you might expect, that was a challenge. Many of the vendors we engaged with weren't familiar with local government procurement and the importance of managing taxpayer dollars. TeamMate stood out because they understood the process and had experience with other government clients.

TeamMate's familiarity with federal requirements made them a strong fit and the best choice overall. Some of the other vendors we initially engaged with had to drop out early in the bidding process because they could not meet the various standard federal requirements and were unable to agree to the necessary compliance requirements.

TeamMate: Before the sales selection process even began for you, how were you able to convince Chatham County leadership that TeamMate+ was worth the investment?

Jeannie Alday: When I first onboarded with Chatham County, everything was paper-based. Their use of automation was limited almost exclusively to Excel

spreadsheets. I quickly introduced a few automation processes utilizing the Access database for the functionality of the audit and OneNote as the workpaper repository. Management almost immediately saw the improvements—better reports, greater performance metrics, etc. So, when I mentioned my plans nearing retirement and the need for an even greater, more sustainable and scalable audit management system, they were on board. They understood that by transitioning to an audit management platform like TeamMate+ my successor would have the best opportunity available to be successful and make it their own.

Functionality priorities and risk assessments

TeamMate: What functionality was most important to you? Was there anything that was absolutely imperative for your team to have available to realize continued success?

Jeannie Alday: I was focused on finding a solution that logically flowed with the way we approach our audits. We needed a system that mirrored our audit process. I have always been a firm believer in the process of objectives, risks, and controls driving everything that follows. You need to first establish management's objectives, assess the risks, then identify the key controls. This needs to occur before you can even begin developing a program. I wanted a solution that represented a similar flow or could be configured to do so.

I also wanted a better overall risk assessment process that would allow for increased coverage and detailed risk scoring. One that was able to seamlessly integrate the necessary information gathering (talking and interviewing) into the audit management application. This was very important to management. In local government, unlike the private sector, we audit everything—from animal services and parks and recreation to law enforcement and public works. The business structures that we review vary significantly and we needed a system that could handle that complexity and allow us to configure scoring methodologies to fit our needs. TeamMate+ allowed us to tie risk scores and the risk assessments to the audit planning, which helped management better understand our priorities and see the bigger picture.

Audit execution, the team experience, and the impact of TeamMate+

TeamMate: How has TeamMate+ helped with your overall audit execution?

Jeannie Alday: Based on the structure we were discussing earlier—objectives, risks, controls—TeamMate+ has helped my team stay organized. Two of my auditors specifically have said that it helps them be more efficient, and that TeamMate+ is more visual. The layout, audit status codes—in progress, completed, etc.— and the Gantt chart have all helped to ensure they stay organized and on track. The layout of TeamMate+ quickly provides a visual reference of how the item that you are working on relates to other items and the big picture. They feel that they are obtaining greater value from an organizational perspective and appreciate that the layout is more visual.

TeamMate: How would you summarize the impact of moving to TeamMate+?

Jeannie Alday: TeamMate+ allows us to combine audit management and the workpapers library together in one place, something that we were unable to do previously. As a result, it has enhanced our overall efficiency. Additionally, the visual organization has assisted the auditors to better understand, define, and stay ahead of emerging risks. But it's more than just efficiency—it's about effectiveness. TeamMate+ has allowed the auditors to shift their focus from administrative and procedural tasks to high-value, strategic audit activities—such as risk assessment, control evaluation, and delivering actionable insights—by streamlining the audit process and eliminating manual inefficiencies.

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