



Procentia ensures TPA's railroad client gets on the right track

When the Alaska Railroad was seeking a third party to support the administration of its pension plan, the company selected Atéssa Benefits, which made its successful bid for the contract based on the use of Procentia IntelliPlan. The cutting-edge pensions software system and Procentia's development team have been pivotal in helping Atéssa meet and exceed its client's demands.

By adopting a proactive approach, Atéssa Benefits sees itself as an extension of its clients' HR teams. With history dating back over 30 years, the company's recent success has been boosted by Procentia's IntelliPlan pensions administration software, which replaced an in-house solution developed on an Access database.

IntelliPlan is an advanced product that provides a complete occupational group pensions system. The software features a sophisticated database and data structures that handle the complexities that occur in large plans with multiple payrolls.

We wanted something that was more robust, flexible, and supportable

Mike Bourne,
Managing Partner at Atéssa

Large active plan

Since the completion of the main line in 1923, ARRC has grown into a full-service freight and passenger railroad, connecting ports and communities to the metro hubs of Anchorage and Fairbanks. ARRC is a state-owned corporation that operates like a private business (its labor is not part of the state personnel system) and that needs to generate sufficient revenue from its services to cover the cost of its workforce, operations, and infrastructure maintenance.

Although most of Atéssa's large plans in its service line at that time were frozen, the opportunity arose to bid on the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC), an active plan.

"We made a proposal and won the contract," says Bourne. "But we had just five months to get everything up and running, so the timing was very tight given this was the first client Atéssa would implement on IntelliPlan. Thankfully, good collaboration with Procentia meant we could complete the implementation and commissioning phase on time. We're very grateful to Procentia's support for that, and it is evidence of how easy working with IntelliPen actually is."

Atéssa Benefits has since won a re-bid, indicating a high level of customer satisfaction. Between the bids, system development in partnership with Procentia formed a critical part of achieving successful plan administration.

One of the major development items focused on actuarial valuation.

Rapid implementation

"Early on there were lots of calculation checks because it was a fast implementation," explains Bourne. "For that first valuation data report, we developed the report based on what we would typically give an actuary. However, the new actuary (ARRC also selected a new actuarial firm during the request for proposal process) wanted to see certain things differently, so we had to work through that. With Procentia's help we were able to make changes to the outputs; the way data flows. As a result, generating the valuation data report is almost a pushbutton exercise. Flexibility is a big benefit of IntelliPlan. A lot of the other pension administration platforms simply do not have that capability."

Another significant development item centered on calculation updates, which were necessary due to the introduction of a tier-two plan at ARRC.



"Tier-two employees do not receive a benefit until the completion of five years' service, so we had to program many new instructions with assistance from Procentia," adds Bourne. "Again, IntelliPlan proved to be very flexible. We now have plan participants who are either tier one or tier two."

Ongoing support

System flexibility and ongoing support from Procentia were clearly proving crucial in underpinning the service that Atéssa Benefits provided to ARRC. Of course, support comes in many guises, including calculation inquiries, client integration/script support, and general data support, with many of these called upon to help administer the ARRC plan.

For instance, Procentia's team cleaned a set of third-party scripts and set them up in a more straightforward way to help non-technical administrators. Bourne states: "We had two guys working on the scripts, but only a five-month timeline to achieve implementation, so the scripts ended up being a little 'shorthand' and we asked Procentia to get the scripts cleaned up and documented. Now, if for some reason we need to change a report, it's a lot easier to manage."

The need to update reports and layouts is often a recurring theme when dealing with large, active pension plans. Fortunately, the functionality and inherent flexibility of IntelliPlan makes light work of these demands.



"Understanding which reports are required can often be slightly confusing for clients," says Bourne. "However, we have successfully worked through it with Procentia, where today the plan sponsor can independently pull information and run most of the basic reports themselves. We also run more sophisticated reports, albeit on a less frequent basis. It's a nice and steady arrangement now."

Multiple payrolls

As a large active plan with multiple payroll feeds, the accurate documentation of custom scripts for ARRC payroll imports (earnings, hours, status), contribution, and interest processing becomes highly important. And yet initially the cross-matching of data between ARRC and Atéssa Benefits did not stack up.

"The idea is to have frictionless transfer of data between one system and another, but this wasn't happening," says Bourne.

"However, with a communication issue resolved and Procentia's documentation of custom scripts for ARRC payroll imports, things today run smoothly to the satisfaction of the client."

He adds: "Put it this way, we did not simply win the re-bid on price. Importantly, ARRC told us how much they enjoyed working with us. We help ensure things run smoothly, and that data is clean."

Established partnership

Procentia still provides small-scale support and documentation to this day, with the partnership between the two companies firmly established.

"IntelliPlan is by far the most flexible platform," concludes Bourne. "You may think that all plans will be administered in the same way, but each plan sponsor has specific nuances. IntelliPlan is a system that can provide the flexibility to manage this. Just as significant, the Procentia team is very knowledgeable: the workflows they created at the start were great, as were the custom wizards. This cannot be stated strongly enough, it's just a pleasure to work with Procentia. Instead of treating change requests as problems, they are regarded as an opportunity for the team to shine and to overcome any challenges faced."

The name Atéssa (pronounced ah-TAY-suh) derives from the Italian word attesa, meaning "expectation."

Just as its clients have high expectations of Atéssa, so Atéssa has high expectations of its vendors, such as Procentia. However, as the ARRC project reveals, expecting the unexpected - and developing a way through any challenges - ensures a pleasing outcome for all stakeholders.

Contact Procentia, Inc.



Get in touch with us:
(847) 496-7477



Email:
sales@procentiaUS.com



Look us up on:
www.procentia.com



Where we're
located:

**1540 E. Dundee Rd.
Suite 215 Palatine,
IL 60074 USA**