



Improving healthcare through laboratory medicine

**Customer:** American Association for Clinical Chemistry

**Web Site:** [www.aacc.org](http://www.aacc.org)

**Customer Size:** 50 employees

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** Nonprofit—Member association

**Partner:** Watkins IT

#### Customer Profile

The American Association for Clinical Chemistry is dedicated to advancing the field of clinical chemistry. With 10,000 members, the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit maintains 50 computers and 22 servers.

#### Software and Services

- Microsoft Office
  - Microsoft Office Professional 2007

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## Nonprofit Saves Money and Improves Decision Making by Deploying Latest Desktop Software

“Using Excel 2007 enables us to present the data in dynamic charts and graphs, which make the information more relevant and easy to understand.”

Christina Elder, IT Director, American Association for Clinical Chemistry

*The American Association for Clinical Chemistry was committed to remaining up-to-date with technology. As a nonprofit, however, the AACC needed to invest its technology budget wisely. By deploying the 2007 Microsoft® Office system, the AACC was able to improve efficiency and member outreach. Further, the association has increased its financial reporting, thus enhancing the board’s ability to make educated decisions. Because of this solution, the group expects to save U.S.\$5,000.*

#### Business Needs

Founded in 1948, the American Association for Clinical Chemistry (AACC) is a leading professional society dedicated to improving healthcare by advancing knowledge, expertise, and innovation in laboratory medicine. Its members are clinical laboratory professionals, physicians, research scientists, and others involved in developing tests and directing laboratory operations.

For the past few years, AACC’s almost 50 employees had been using Microsoft® Office Professional Edition 2003 for daily business tasks. In addition to using the Office Outlook® messaging and collaboration client for e-mail, employees were using Office Word

and Office Excel® spreadsheet software heavily in their day-to-day operations.

A particular challenge that AACC faced regularly was its financial reporting, which involved building data-intensive spreadsheets. For example, the association’s leading indicators report—produced twice per month—tracks 35 financial key indicators. “The data was filled in manually,” says Christina Elder, IT Director at AACC. “Before it was too labor intensive to produce an advance report or include charts or graphs with the data.”

Another challenge for AACC was sending out member mailings. Employees used the Word

2003 Mail Merge feature to print letters to members onto forms preprinted by a commercial print shop. In order to complete the mail merge, staffers ran a report of membership data stored in Microsoft SQL Server® database software, a process that stalled periodically. Also, the forms regularly caused the printer to jam. “We would send out letters only once a week because of the amount of time it would take and how complicated the process could be,” says Elder.

## Solution

As a registered nonprofit, the AACC was eligible to purchase volume licenses for Microsoft Office Professional 2007 at reduced nonprofit rates through its Microsoft partner, Watkins IT. A Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, Watkins also managed the software deployment and provided half-day training classes to AACC employees.

Watkins IT divided the AACC employees into four groups, with each group receiving training tailored to their job functions. While the groups were in their training classes, Watkins deployed the software using Group Policy settings. “When employees finished training, Office 2007 was installed on their computer,” says John Mahoney, Manager of System Services for Watkins IT.

Afterward, the trainer answered questions on a one-to-one basis. “It went very smoothly,” says Elder. “We had no issues, thanks to the planned training and deployment schedule delivered by Watkins.” Some employees received additional deep training, enabling them to act as future resources for others. The entire training and deployment process took eight business days.

According to Elder, employees were a bit surprised by the Microsoft Office Fluent™ user

interface but quickly saw the benefits. “Employees find that using the Ribbon to access tasks is much easier,” she says. “They like the new functionality.”

Elder says that the conditional formatting and more intuitive tables and graphs in Office Excel 2007 have made it easier for employees to manipulate and analyze the association’s complex, data-rich financial spreadsheets.

Furthermore, employees now can use Office Word 2007 to merge membership data directly from the SQL Server–based database. “It is very stable now,” says Elder. “We are able to conduct the mail merge easily with Word 2007, and it is no longer relegated to once a week. We produce letters daily on demand now.” The association has begun producing and printing personalized member letters from within Word 2007, eliminating the use of preprinted forms. In addition, because of the improved integration between Office Outlook 2007 and Office Word 2007, the association is sending all members with an e-mail address a letter through e-mail.

## Benefits

With the Microsoft Office 2007 suites, the AACC is raising employee productivity and increasing member outreach. The association also has improved its board’s ability to make financial recommendations. Finally, the AACC anticipates saving roughly U.S.\$5,000 next year, thanks to the streamlined member letter processes enabled by Office 2007.

■ **Increased productivity.** Elder estimates that an administrative employee who works extensively with financial data is now 50 percent more productive with

Office Excel 2007 than with previous versions. “It takes her maybe an hour and a half to produce the leading indicators reports with supporting charts and graphs that previously were just too time-consuming,” says Elder. Now we’re able to present the report to the board every month, which has been praised at the executive level.” And the improvements are not limited to Excel users, says Elder. “The mail merge process for member letters is much faster now, too. It’s definitely a more efficient process.”

- **Enhanced member outreach.** The association now sends out either printed or electronic versions of member letters on a daily basis, rather than once per week. “We’re keeping our members engaged,” says Elder.
- **Improved decision making.** “We now can easily produce a leading financial indicators report four to six weeks in advance of board meetings, enabling the board to make better recommendations and decisions for the association,” says Elder. “Further, using Excel 2007 enables us to present the data in dynamic charts and graphs, which make the information more relevant and easy to understand.”
- **Anticipated savings of \$5,000.** The association has already saved \$4,000 by eliminating the use of preprinted forms for member letters. And because employees have found the integration between Office Word 2007 and Office Outlook 2007 to be seamless, AACC is now sending all member letters through e-mail whenever possible, saving an additional \$1,000.