

Company name

The Hotchkiss School

Location

Lakeville, Connecticut

IndustryEducation | Independent
School

“We expanded access for everyone and provided clear instructions on how to use the tool and communicated its benefits effectively. This broad implementation of Fraxion was the key catalyst for success.”

Kevin Warend

Director of IT services

CASE STUDY

Company profile

The Hotchkiss School is an independent boarding school located in Lakeville, Connecticut. Founded in 1891, the School provides an education of academic distinction to 599 students in grades 9 through 12, and to a small number of postgraduates. Students at Hotchkiss come from across the United States and around the world. Graduates attend many of the most selective universities and colleges.

Before Fraxion

Prior to implementing Fraxion, The Hotchkiss School relied on manual, paper-based processes. The Purchasing Manager at that time sought a solution that could seamlessly integrate with Microsoft Dynamics GP, and Fraxion emerged as one of the few systems capable of meeting the required level of integration.

Following the initial implementation of Fraxion, staff continued to submit requisitions using paper forms, even though an online tool was available. This dual approach led to confusion and inconsistencies in the purchasing process.

Additionally, various methods for making purchases were in play, including corporate purchasing cards and check request forms for one-off payments to individuals not set up as vendors. These payments, often linked to 1099 transactions, introduced a variety of processes for handling commitments, complicating oversight and control of spending.

Although Fraxion had been implemented to streamline procurement activities, it was underutilized at that point, due to limited user access and inadequate communication regarding the benefits of fully embracing automation.

CASE STUDY

The solution

Fraxion expansion and adoption

When Rob Seymour joined Hotchkiss as the Purchasing Manager in 2016, he quickly recognized the inefficiencies in the existing procurement process and the untapped potential of fully automating and integrating workflows via Fraxion. The changes he implemented marked a turning point for the School's procurement practices. With support from the Director of Information Technology Services, Kevin Warena, he spearheaded a comprehensive onboarding process to transition the team from traditional, paper-based methods to a more streamlined, digital approach. These efforts focused on expanding the functionality and usage of Fraxion, ensuring that teachers and staff across the campus could access the system, ultimately driving the necessary change and significantly enhancing overall efficiency. Kevin Warena explained, "We expanded access for everyone and provided clear instructions on how to use the tool and communicated its benefits effectively. This broad implementation of Fraxion was the key catalyst for success."

Kevin describes the "major steps forward in adoption" as Rob's recognition of the value of Fraxion, ensuring that everyone had access to the system, and the introduction of the PunchOut feature, which allows users to browse external online stores and integrate items directly into Fraxion for requisition and approval. This capability significantly changed perceptions, demonstrating the convenience of browsing and selecting items within a streamlined system. "It was really popular because it mirrored the familiar online shopping experience many users were already comfortable with, browsing on Amazon," Kevin added.

Procure-to-pay suite

The PunchOut feature and its impact

The seamless integration of vendor catalogs into Fraxion's procurement software made it easy for users at all levels to adapt. Teachers, managers, and assistants could create requisitions with ease, thanks to the familiar interface of the PunchOut catalogs. The ability to browse and add items to the procurement system as they would in any online store has simplified the process and increased user satisfaction. Enhanced transparency and accountability are achieved through monthly and annual system-generated reports, which provide detailed spending breakdowns by department to the Controller and CFO. The School now utilizes PunchOut with fourteen different vendor integrations, including Amazon, Grainger, Staples, B&H Photo, and Graybar. Among these, Amazon is the most frequently used vendor with the highest transaction value due to its extensive product range and ease of use.



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Rob Seymour
Purchasing Manager

CASE STUDY

The adoption of the PunchOut feature came at a crucial time, driven by the necessity to streamline procurement and consolidate disparate purchasing accounts and vendors. Kevin explained, “Rob consolidated the individual Amazon accounts and upgraded to an Amazon Business account. Fraxion PunchOut streamlined our process, and the combination of system controls and the upgraded account introduced additional cost-saving benefits.” This consolidation eliminated the “Wild West” scenario of multiple individual accounts, ensuring a more controlled and efficient purchasing environment.

“Fraxion’s PunchOut integration helped corral the Wild West of individual accounts and payment methods, allowing us to fully benefit from the features and cost savings of a consolidated Amazon Business account,” Kevin Warena.

The PunchOut feature has transformed the procurement process for Hotchkiss by streamlining requisitions across all organizational levels. With both managers and assistants empowered to create orders within set dollar limits, the system enhances efficiency and responsiveness. Fraxion’s PunchOut integration not only simplifies order placement but also leverages pre-negotiated terms for discounts on bulk and frequently purchased items, driving overall cost savings. Additionally, the system ensures that all processes and spending align with internal policies and approval workflows, effectively balancing operational efficiency with spend management.

Vendor management, integration, and consolidation

Effective vendor management is essential for The Hotchkiss School, given the wide range of products and services required to support its operations. The implementation of Fraxion has improved how the School engages with its vendors, fostering stronger partnerships and maximizing value. Central to this enhancement is the PunchOut process, which integrates preferred vendors directly into the procurement workflow.

Purchasing Manager, Rob emphasized, “The PunchOut process is crucial for us. We work with a variety of local and non-local vendors, and selecting the right one goes beyond price—it's about the whole package. Partnering with Fraxion has shown us the value of great service and open communication, which makes a big difference. The system facilitates these relationships by enabling better communication and service expectations.” When choosing a vendor, Hotchkiss considers not only the cost but also the quality of service and the ability to maintain an open dialogue. This approach ensures that vendors are seen as “partners rather than just suppliers,” fostering a collaborative environment where both parties can succeed.

CASE STUDY

The ability to streamline vendor management in Fraxion has also led to a reduction in the overall number of vendors. In the past, individual departments might have had the freedom to engage with multiple vendors independently, leading to a fragmented procurement landscape. Today, the system consolidates these efforts, focusing on a core group of reliable vendors. This consolidation not only simplifies procurement but also strengthens relationships with key vendors, as the School can leverage higher volumes of business to negotiate better terms and services.

"Fraxion has streamlined our process significantly compared to the past when everyone was purchasing from different vendors. We've reduced the number of vendors we work with; it's streamlined the process significantly." Rob Seymour, Purchasing Manager.

One of the notable benefits of the system is its ability to track and manage vendor performance. By providing detailed reports on vendor spending, the School can easily monitor which vendors are being used most frequently and where the highest spend is occurring. This visibility helps in assessing the value provided by each vendor and making informed decisions about future agreements. Rob noted, "Previously, we struggled to track where the money was being spent until well after the fact. Now, with our clear view of expenditure, we can easily pull reports and review budgets to understand and justify purchases in real-time."

Approval process

Fraxion has been configured to manage approvals by department, with department heads responsible for initial approvals. If a transaction exceeds a certain amount, it is escalated through up to five levels of approval, ensuring thorough oversight. This mature and robust approval matrix is a critical requirement for Hotchkiss, and the software's ability to support such a detailed and layered process has been instrumental in reducing financial risk and ensuring compliance with the School's policies.

"One of our key requirements is a robust approval matrix. Fraxion supports our complex needs with multiple levels and departmental thresholds, unlike many software products, limited to basic thresholds or locations. This setup meets our requirements and reduces financial risk," Kevin Warena. Previously, the approval process was cumbersome and prone to delays. Transactions often didn't reach the necessary approvers, leading to frequent calls and manual interventions to push requests through. Today, the system automatically routes requests to the appropriate approvers based on predefined thresholds and department assignments.



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Kevin added, “We've set up the system to align with our policies, ensuring that approvals are routed to the right people based on authorization levels. It even handles out-of-office situations and assigns backup approvers seamlessly. This has streamlined our approval process significantly, ensuring that approvals are not stalled due to personnel unavailability.”

Fraxion’s email notifications and the ability to add tracking numbers further enhances the process. For example, once a purchase order is placed, tracking numbers are automatically attached to the requisition, allowing users to monitor their orders in real time. This integration keeps all relevant information and communication in one place, facilitating easy access and transparency.

The combination of automated routing, integrated communication, and consistent application of approval rules has drastically reduced the manual effort and errors associated with the previous process. As a result, The Hotchkiss School has seen a significant improvement in the efficiency and reliability of its procurement processes. “Kevin added, “The communication and routing tools have been really effective.”

Procurement by department

The system has become an integral part of the School’s procurement strategy. The system has cut unnecessary spending by enhancing visibility into departmental purchases. Rob highlighted an example: “Fraxion has reduced IT spending by ensuring that essential items like computers are bought from approved vendors, meeting the School's standards and specifications, and preventing unauthorized purchases.” This digital approach and oversight ensure that every dollar spent is maximized for value.

Invoice management

A key improvement introduced by Fraxion is the streamlined handling of invoices. Previously, vendor invoices that were not part of a purchase order had to be manually entered into the accounting system, with approvals managed through email. This manual process was time-consuming and error-prone, requiring staff to know and follow approval rules precisely. Now, whether it's a requisition to a purchase order or a direct invoice, Fraxion applies the same approval matrix, ensuring consistency and compliance. Any related email chains or documentation are uploaded as attachments, maintaining comprehensive records that are invaluable for audits and routine financial reviews. Rob Seymour’s outlook, “Fraxion completely opened up a new way of doing things. When I first arrived, we were handling around 1,100 purchase orders annually. Last fiscal year, that number surged to over 3,000.



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The addition of the invoice functionality made the system a powerhouse." Fraxion has transformed the School's approach to managing invoices. It significantly improved organization, introduced automated reminders, and streamlined processes. "As Kevin would agree, while we took a gradual approach initially, we have now fully optimized the invoice process and achieved a high level of efficiency," added Rob.

Kevin remarked, "When a tracking number is added, I receive an email notification and can click directly on it. The system's ability to maintain all context with the requisition is invaluable. Reflecting on their previous process, he said "Where invoices were manually entered into GP and approvals were handled via email, the integration of invoice entry into the system has significantly streamlined and improved our workflow."

BENEFITS

ERP integration benefits

The integration of Fraxion's procurement software with The Hotchkiss School's existing accounting system, Microsoft Dynamics GP, has introduced substantial benefits. One of the primary reasons for choosing this software was its compatibility with the on-premise GP installation, ensuring seamless synchronization between procurement and financial management processes. This direct integration has facilitated real-time budget tracking and control, allowing users to see committed expenditures immediately in the system. Additionally, the software's flexibility in handling over-budget spending by routing such requests for approval or blocking them altogether is helpful in maintaining financial discipline. Kevin said, "Once budgets are committed in GP, it's immediately visible in the request, allowing users to see the spending in real-time." Consolidating budget data and procurement activities into one cohesive platform enables efficient and accountable financial management.

Audit readiness and best practices

One of Fraxion's key benefits is centralizing all purchasing records and documentation in one repository, eliminating manual tracking and enhancing transparency, which significantly reduces the time and effort required for audit preparation.

Previously, Hotchkiss' approval process was manual and required extensive knowledge and application of rules. Now, Fraxion automates approvals for requisitions, purchase orders, and invoices, ensuring consistency and compliance.



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Integration with Microsoft Dynamics GP enhances this capability by linking transactions for easy cross-referencing within the system.

Auditors can quickly access approval records, supporting documentation, and real-time data on pending approvals and invoices, facilitating timely reporting and discrepancy resolution.

Rob shared, "Audits are much easier with Fraxion. I recently ran a report from January to June and found only two open invoices—astonishing! The real-time visibility ensures nothing slips through the cracks. Our previous controller never had to ask about purchase orders during audits; everything was fully documented. I haven't had to speak with an auditor in years. "Kevin confirmed, "One of the biggest efficiencies we've gained is in the audit process. With Fraxion, all purchase records are centralized, so if an auditor asks for approval records, we can provide them instantly without sifting through file cabinets or emails."

He added, "The efficiency gains are significant, from placing and fulfilling orders to reporting and data visibility. But the real standout is the audit capability—centralizing records for instant access is a key component of best practices. As the GL is posted, everything aligns perfectly. Requisition numbers, receiving records, and payment vouchers are all seamlessly integrated, there's no longer a need for manual matching. The integration with GP ensures that all necessary information is readily accessible for audits, streamlining tasks that would otherwise consume time and resources. This efficiency means no one has to search for missing data—everything is organized and available when needed, which is the best success you can achieve."

Policy management and compliance

Fraxion ensures compliance with procurement guidelines by routing transactions through an approval structure based on department and dollar thresholds. For high-volume departments like Hotchkiss' Health Center, increased purchasing limits streamline routine buys while maintaining oversight. Detailed records of exceptions and email authorizations enhance transparency and accountability.

Kevin explained: "While we don't have strict policies on which products can be bought, the PunchOut feature really helps guide our team. It steers them towards preferred options, making sure we stay consistent and cost-effective. Rob has set up preferred and restricted items within our vendor catalogs, which are automatically enforced. When users browse through the PunchOut catalog, they are directed toward our preferred items and benefit from contract pricing.



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“Fraxion plays a role in improving the visibility and management of these funds.”

Kevin Warendra

Director of IT Services

Fraxion helps us ensure that purchases align with our preferred vendors and products without the need to maintain a large inventory. Instead, we can order just in time and still achieve the same results. This approach has been particularly effective with vendors like B&H and Amazon, where we often secure better pricing than what's available in the open market.”

Improved endowment visibility and management

Endowment management and visibility are key to maintaining donor trust and ensuring that funds are used appropriately. Kevin explained, “At Hotchkiss School, we receive various forms of funding, including endowments, which necessitate careful tracking and reporting. While our primary advancement and development system handles the majority of our detailed endowment reporting, Fraxion plays a role in improving the visibility and management of these funds.”

One of the key features is the approval workflow for endowed and special accounts. By adding specific approval steps for special funds, the system ensures that all expenditures are meticulously reviewed and approved by the appropriate fund stewards and our development office. “This oversight not only aligns expenditures with donor intentions but provides visibility into how their contributions are used,” Kevin added.

He noted, “The additional approval workflow steps for special funds have been beneficial. Now, regardless of who is charging against these accounts, the fund stewards and our development office are included in the workflow. This ensures that the information flows seamlessly to the right places, enhancing our oversight of these funds. This enables us to keep donors informed and acknowledged for their contributions.”

Cost savings

Navigating the economic pressures of inflation and rising costs, The Hotchkiss School has realized savings via the visibility and controls that Fraxion has enabled. While exact figures are challenging to quantify, the tangible benefits and savings are evident in various aspects of the School's operations.

“I can definitely say that the savings are real. Although inflation makes it hard to quantify exact numbers,” said Rob. Kevin agreed, “If we didn't have the system, it's hard to say how much we'd be spending unnecessarily. But having it in place makes a significant difference in controlling costs. We know we wouldn't be getting the same discounts and negotiated rates without the system. From an anecdotal level, it's clear that costs would be higher due to less control. Without it, people could spend freely, and any budget overspend would only be discovered after the fact.”



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Rob Seymour
Purchasing Manager

“Over the last nine years, the cost of the system hasn’t increased dramatically. It’s not just a cost center; it’s an essential investment, similar to vehicles, lawn mowers, or the staff that educate our students. This tool is valuable because it enables us to perform critical functions effectively,” said Kevin.

Rob highlighted, “One of the primary advantages of Fraxion is its ability to provide visibility into every transaction. This transparency allows us to seek out the best deals for high-dollar purchases, often leading to savings. For example, we saved \$3,000 on a \$15,000 machine purchase by leveraging the system’s integrated vendor programs. We frequently see cost reductions—sometimes up to 20%—compared to schools that may pay full price.”

WORKING WITH FRAXION

Exceptional support and a strong partnership

Kevin shared his view of Hotchkiss’ relationship with Fraxion, “One of the key benefits we’ve experienced in our procurement journey at Hotchkiss School is the exceptional support and partnership provided by Fraxion. Finding a vendor that offers a comprehensive solution to meet our goals and needs was crucial, and Fraxion has consistently delivered on this front. This strong partnership has been a factor in expanding our licensing and features with Fraxion, recognizing the opportunity to further enhance our processes.

As an IT Director, I can attest to the importance of having a vendor partner like Fraxion, an organization genuinely invested in our success. Unlike many other software vendors, Fraxion provides a level of accessibility and responsiveness that sets them apart. We have direct access to our contacts at Fraxion and can easily pick up the phone and call them whenever we need support. This personal touch means we aren't left waiting for nameless, faceless support tickets to be addressed. Their commitment was evident when Fraxion’s CEO joined our recent demo of their latest developments, showing their dedication to our success and understanding that their success is linked to how well we use their product.

Fraxion's willingness to support us is evident in the way they handle technical issues or specific needs that arise, so we just appreciate the whole team. This responsiveness and adaptability ensure that the product continuously evolves to meet our School’s needs. Following the merger, we experienced zero disruption from the organizational changes at Fraxion. The transition was seamless, and it was business as usual from our perspective as a customer.



“Our experience with Fraxion has been overwhelmingly positive. Their exceptional support, solutions-driven approach, and commitment to our success make them a standout vendor.”

“For any school looking to enhance their procurement processes, we highly recommend partnering with Fraxion. Their dedication to customer satisfaction and continuous improvement ensures that you will have a reliable and supportive partner on your procurement journey.”

Kevin Warena
Director of IT Services

Our journey with Fraxion is ongoing, and while the product already meets about 90% of our needs, the remaining 10% is being steadily addressed through this collaborative effort. No software solution is ever perfect, but Fraxion's dedication to making enhancements based on our feedback is what makes them a valued partner. This kind of partnership is something we highly recommend to other schools. Ensuring you work with a vendor willing to improve their product to meet industry-specific challenges and customer needs, as not every organization's process and requirements are the same.

Overall, our experience with Fraxion has been overwhelmingly positive. Their exceptional support, solutions-driven approach, and commitment to our success make them a standout vendor. For any school looking to enhance their procurement processes, we highly recommend partnering with Fraxion. Their dedication to customer satisfaction and continuous improvement ensures that you will have a reliable and supportive partner on your procurement journey.”

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the School-wide adoption and ease of use of Fraxion's procurement software have been transformative for The Hotchkiss School. The system, with seamless accounting integration has streamlined procurement and financial processes, optimized audit readiness, and simplified record-keeping and compliance. By centralizing and consolidating vendor management and leveraging PunchOut features, the School has fostered stronger vendor relationships and realized cost savings, all while adhering to procurement policies. The real-time visibility and analytics with efficient reporting have empowered smarter financial decisions, reinforcing fiscal responsibility and oversight.

For educational institutions aiming to improve procurement processes, Fraxion is more than just a tool – it is a reliable partner. With robust software and exceptional service, schools can gain the support to realize sustainable savings and efficiencies while navigating economic uncertainty.

KEY BENEFITS

- Ease of use
- Ease of adoption
- Efficiency
- Transparency
- Auditability
- Time savings
- Cost savings