JAMAICA RAIS

Project Highlight
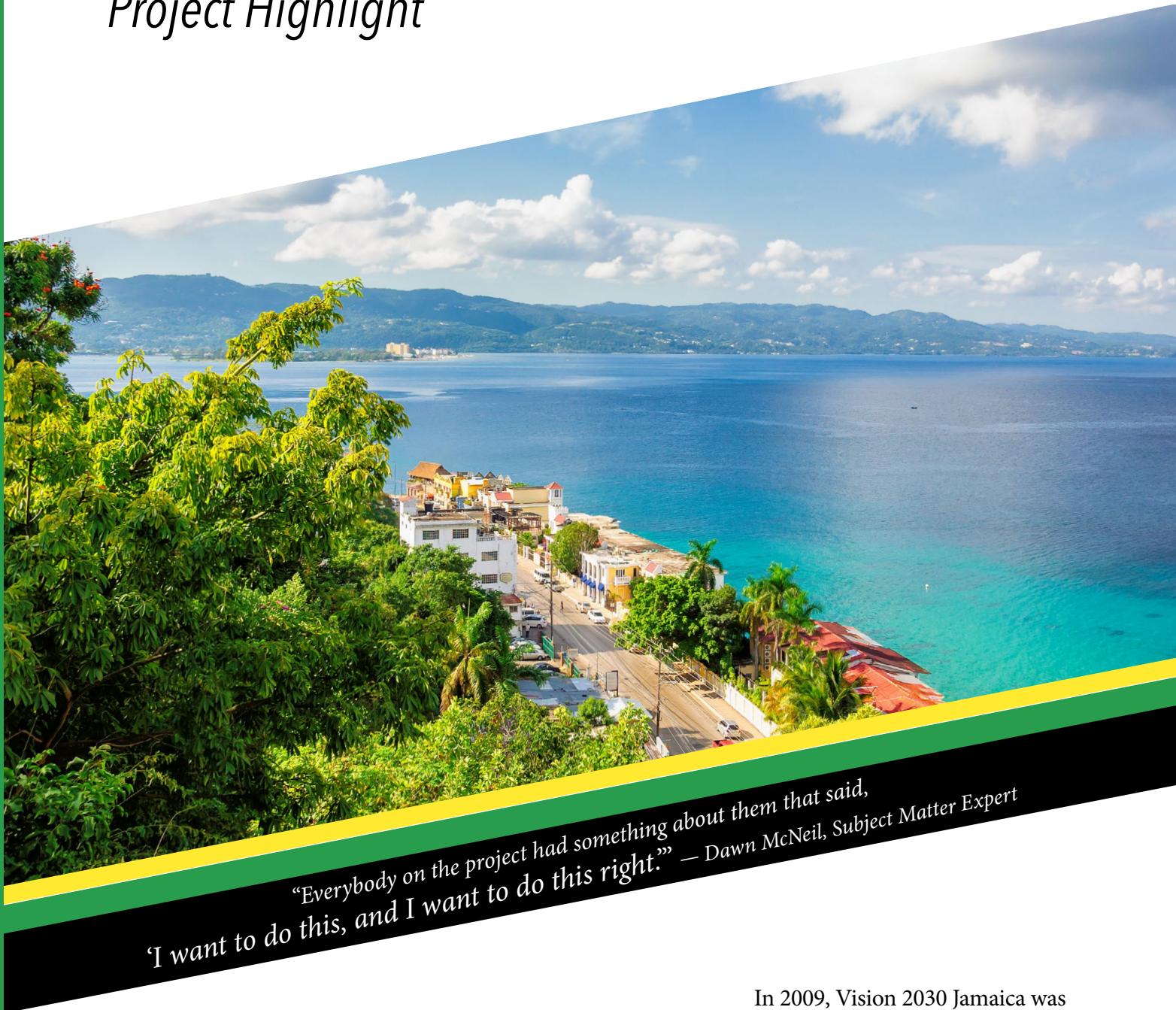
"Everybody on the project had something about them that said,
'I want to do this, and I want to do this right.'" — Dawn McNeil, Subject Matter Expert

In 2009, Vision 2030 Jamaica was introduced—a national development plan to make Jamaica *the place of choice to live, work, raise families, and do business.*

"Coming out of this reengineering was a recommendation for software, hardware, and buildings for Tax Administration Jamaica. So we had a major project where the software was a single component," said Vaughn Thomas, Jamaican Technical Lead for RAIS. "We knew that we had to find software that integrated well with the goals of the organisation."

From April 2014 to September 2016, Tax Administration Jamaica (TAJ) worked with Fast Enterprises to implement their new Revenue Administration Information System (RAIS) as part of a larger series of changes taking place within the organisation to help achieve the goals outlined in *Vision 2030 Jamaica*.

The FAST project staff who helped the government of Jamaica implement their new tax software learned that Jamaicans are hard-working, determined, and passionate people.

> *"Part of our culture is that we want to be the best. We strive to push ourselves to be the best."*
> *– Vincent Irving*

An Organisation Committed to Change

Even before the project, the Jamaican team was not only willing to change, but actively seeking it out. "We wanted the change. Because we wanted to go as far as possible in terms of our development," said Jean James, Business Lead for the RAIS project. Vincent Irving, a member of TAJ's Programmes Unit, explained that this desire was rooted in the Jamaican culture, "Part of our culture is that we want to be the best. We strive to push ourselves to be the best."

> *"We need to be in an environment that allows us to react quickly and RAIS has allowed us to do that." – Gerrard Edman*

The team cited this desire to be the best and open communication throughout the project as primary reasons for its success. Ryan Taylor, FAST Project Architect, explained that the agency's open-minded attitude resulted in a productive environment. "Because of TAJ's willingness to listen to and try new ideas, we were able to deliver more features within the system than we would have otherwise," Ryan Taylor said. Natasha Sampson, TAJ CIO, echoed this sentiment from TAJ's perspective: "The willingness of the FAST team to listen to us, but also to offer alternatives when our suggestions weren't the best option available, was part of what made the project successful."

From the Top Down

The first person to log in to the live RAIS system was Commissioner General Ainsley Powell. Darryn Hernandez, FAST Project Manager during the implementation, said that Powell logged in every morning and taught himself how to use the system rather than waiting for training. Ryan Taylor added that Powell would ask the team questions about what he was seeing to ensure he understood the reports. To Powell, it was important to use the system to guide his decisions. "I felt that we needed access to the data in these reports as managers of the system so that we could make educated decisions," Powell said.

By logging in daily, Powell sends a clear message to everyone working under him. "Seeing his response to the system helped the end users to understand the importance of it. The thought was, 'The CG is using the system. If he can do it, you can do it,'" said

> *"We knew the importance this system was going to have in our future."*
> *– Natasha Sampson*

Left to right: Marcia Copeland, George Wright, Meris Haughton, Dave Jeffery, Ainsley Powell, Hank Williams

Johanna Madden-Samuels, a RAIS Training Coordinator. Powell also emphasized the significance of training for the users on his team, "I made sure I presented myself in several training sessions to send the message not just that training is important, but that *this* training is important."

For the project team, Powell selected staff who shared the vision of the organisation. Powell said, "I gave the project team the role to be innovative, creative, and to sign off on things." Vaughn Thomas said that the team took this to heart, "I'd call it ownership. The persons who were chosen—they took the work to a different level." "One thing that stands out about TAJ is that they brought an excitement about the project, especially about the changes it was going to bring. They knew it was going to be beneficial to the country and their customers," Darryn Hernandez said.

Project Timeline

MAY 19, 2014

PROJECT START

DECEMBER 7, 2015

ROLLOUT 2
- Payroll Deductions (PAYE, Education Tax, National Insurance Scheme, National Housing Trust, Human Employment And Resource Training (HEART))
  - ›› Monthly Deductions
  - ›› Annual Declarations
- Corporate and Personal Income Tax
- Minimum Business Tax
- Asset Tax

ROLLOUT 1
- General Consumption Tax (GCT)/Special Consumption Tax (SCT)
  - ›› GCT Standard
  - ›› GCT Tourism
  - ›› GCT Insurance
  - ›› GCT Import Services
  - ›› GCT Locally Manufactured Vehicles
  - ›› General Consumption Tax – Tax Withholding Entity
  - ›› SCT Standard
- Guest Accommodation Room Tax (GART)
- Telephone Call Tax

FEBRUARY 9, 2015

ROLLOUT 3
- Withholding Tax (Miscellaneous, Monthly on Interest, Specified Services)
- Contractors Levy
- Claim to Repayment of Income Tax
- Trade and Business Licenses
- Stamp Duty
- Transfer Tax
- Environment Protection Levy
- Betting, Gaming, & Lotteries Tax

SEPTEMBER 5, 2016

Left to right: Vaughn Thomas, Dawn McNeil, Curtis Mayers, Jean James, Gerrard Edman

"Taxpayers are happy because they no longer have to call us to find out what is happening in their account; they can access their account online from anywhere." –Jean James

Benefits

The dedication and hard work that went into the RAIS project is paying off in many ways:

- Customers can now file returns and manage all aspects of their accounts online. "They have TAJ literally at their fingertips," said Gerrard Edman, Assistant General Manager of Client Relationship Management.

- With more customers filing online, TAJ needs less physical storage for paper documents. Postage and paper costs have also been reduced because multiple notices are combined into a single letter.

- Returns are more accurate and complete because RAIS ensures that all the necessary information is collected and within expected parameters.

- A 360-degree view of the customer increases department efficiency and reduces processing time.

- The system has automated previously manual tasks, such as the management of bank interest and other withholding tax certificates, making the overall process more efficient for all organizations involved.

- Real-time analysis allows TAJ to better understand their customers and liabilities.

- In the three years following RAIS, TAJ has exceeded their revenue expectations. Dave Jeffery Deputy Commissioner General for Operations, said in an article published on the Jamaica Information Services' website, "For 2016-17, our target was $266 billion (and) we collected $284 billion… So we are on a trajectory of surpassing another revenue target."

RAiS

Revenue Administration
Information System

Overcoming Obstacles

Locations

Nearly 2,000 RAIS users work in more than 30 offices countrywide. "TAJ was willing to do things like incorporating newsletters and doing show-and-tells; people out in the field offices said that they felt much better informed about the system," said Ryan Taylor.


Testing

It was difficult to dedicate full-time project testers because there would be gaps in their normal workforce. "It was a sacrifice that we had to make. We were looking long-term and we knew the importance this system was going to have in our future," Natasha Sampson said.

Deron Tavares

Learning Curves

The TAJ staff learned the system and more about how other divisions within their organisation work. "A lot of us who worked on this project gained a lot of knowledge. You got to see more and appreciate more how your work affects someone else's work and how their work affects your work," said Ricardo Campbell, RAIS subject-matter expert.

Rommel Beckford and Karlessa Howard

Teamwork

Throughout the RAIS project, TAJ and FAST staff came together to form one cohesive team. "We've become a very close team," said Deron Tavares, a FAST team member on RAIS. Natasha Sampson echoed this statement: "The team gelled, it was difficult to make a distinction between the FAST team and the TAJ team because of the kind of unison in which they started to work." This teamwork helped the project run smoothly, even when things were difficult. Jamelia Currie, another FAST team member, said, "Everyone just came together. If a team was behind, the other teams would come together to help them out."

Jamelia Currie
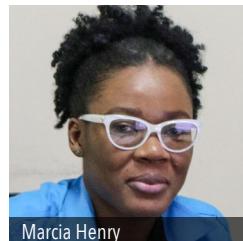
Marcia Henry
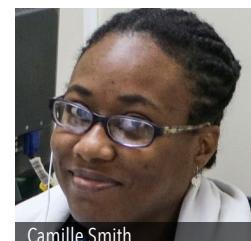
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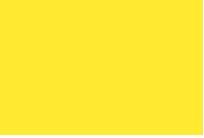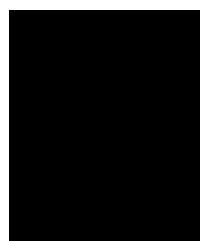
Josh Sanders

Dawn McNeil

Darryn Hernandez
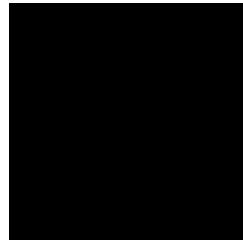
Ryan Taylor

Jean James
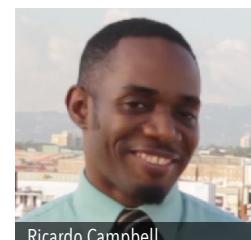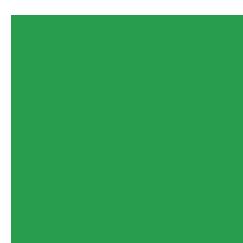
Ricardo Campbell

What's Next?

RAIS completed its last rollout on September 5, 2016, but that doesn't mean that TAJ has stopped improving. In fact, TAJ has goals to continue fine-tuning its business processes. "What I'm trying to do now is see if we can get ourselves organized in the best way to make sure that the human side and the electronic side come together in the perfect system," said Commissioner General Ainsley Powell. "We need to be in an environment that allows us to react quickly and RAIS has allowed us to do that," added Gerrard Edman, Assistant General Manager of Client Relationship Management. Other members of the team echoed this desire for continuous improvement. "We recognize where we are in tax and we recognize where we want to go," said Vincent Irving, a member of TAJ's Programmes Unit. Jean James, Business Lead for the RAIS project summarized, *"Our organisation is a changing organisation."*