FY2018 Year in Review
PRAYER NET AT THE MINISTRY SERVICE CENTER: The fabric strips are just like the lighted candles that are frequently left behind in chapels as evidence of a prayer request that has been “left in God’s hands.”
# Table of Contents

Message from Ascension CEO Anthony Tersigni  
  2

Executive Summary  
  4

A Hub for Collaboration and Problem Solving Across Ascension  
  8

Making It Easier for Ascension Associates to Do What They Do Best  
  14

A Catalyst for Innovative Business Solutions  
  18

Agilify - Leveraging Our Expertise for Ascension and Others  
  22

A Culture that Thrives on Serving Ascension Associates and Patients  
  26
Message from Anthony Tersigni
President and CEO of Ascension

As the healthcare industry continues its rapid change, Ascension has also changed – not only with the industry, but often ahead of it. Together, we have worked to redesign how we deliver services to healthcare consumers and re-imagine how we support the caregivers whose commitment every day advances the fulfillment of our Mission.

As we continue our One Ascension journey, we can look back on the creation of the Ministry Service Center in 2011 as one of our first tangible steps in making our integrated ministry a reality.

While we still have much to do, Ascension today is well positioned for strength and sustainability as our landscape evolves. The Ministry Service Center model demonstrates Ascension’s commitment to embracing a more collaborative and integrated approach that will serve us now and into the future. It continues to be an important platform for many of the changes that are reshaping Ascension.

Looking ahead, we have aligned around our Advanced Strategic Direction and the Dual Transformation that calls us to transform our core healthcare operations to optimize their resilience while also creating new, transformational models that extend the reach of our ministry and enable our Mission to thrive.
An exciting development in this area was the debut this year of Agilify, which will create a new revenue stream to support our Mission and enables the MSC to offer process automation to other organizations interested in automating their business.

We will continue to find new and better ways to make our healthcare services more convenient and accessible to consumers. At the same time, we will develop innovative solutions that enable us to reach even more lives.

I thank you for all the contributions that our Ministry Service Center team has made this past year in the advancement of our shared ministry and our healing Mission.

I look forward to another year of Mission-inspired transformation.

“While we still have much to do, Ascension today is well positioned for strength and sustainability as our landscape evolves.”
Executive Summary

By all measures, the 2018 Fiscal Year was a successful one for the Ministry Service Center. We delivered our services with ever-increasing quality and efficiency, meeting 98 percent of our service delivery targets versus our committed 95 percent. This performance was achieved at a cost that was 16 percent below our budget target for the fiscal year. Truly an amazing team achievement!

Gaining momentum through partnership and innovation

As the trail-blazer for One Ascension (which we have been since the One Ascension initiative and the Ministry Service Center were launched in 2011), we have continued to adopt, refine and apply new services, policies and technologies along the path toward One Ascension. This past year has been characterized by all new levels of collaboration, automation and associate experience.

While delivering outstanding service, the experience of being served has improved 17% in one year with Customer eXperience (CX) improving from 3.1 to 4.2 out of 5.

At the same time, we successfully rolled out Ascension's first-ever Chat capability, offering associates a new and modern way to get service easily and from their mobile devices.

Our Associate eXperience teams likewise made major improvements in our culture with a ton of major accomplishments culminating in an 88% participation rate in the Model Community Survey, the second highest of any part of Ascension!
This past year has been characterized by all new levels of collaboration and associate experience."

A place of collaboration

Ideally, under One Ascension, there are no business silos and individual agendas. Instead there is open collaboration involving individuals who share a common purpose.

The Ministry Service Center is and has been ground zero for Ascension-wide collaboration. Throughout our history, we’ve been a destination for all parts of Ascension to connect. This year marked a more enduring change as more and more associates working at the Ministry Service Center officially report to other areas, such as Accounting, Tax, HR, Medxcel, Ascension Technologies, The Resource Group and Ascension System Office. Our shared location evolved from a destination for collaboration to a place of collaboration.

Another group effort taking place here in Indianapolis is what we are referring to as the “Finance Transformation.” Multiple accounting and finance functions are coming together as never before to create a single ministry-wide function known as MWF Finance. In unifying and streamlining Ascension’s finance and accounting capabilities, MWF Finance will, among other things, make a higher level of financial expertise available to all ministries. It will help standardize best practices throughout the system, and MWF Finance will serve as a strategic business partner for all leaders within Ascension.

Honing process automation abilities

Relentless pursuit of operational excellence has been a quest of the Ministry Service Center since its inception. We actively pursued process automation as a way to generate significant savings while increasing the accuracy and productivity across all of our work.

We’re improving our efficiency and effectiveness using advanced Intelligent Automation tools, including Ascension’s first-ever augmented Intelligence (AI) solution. It’s an expertise that not only benefits what we do every day, but has become something we can sell to other organizations through our Agilify brand.

Agilify was launched last December (see page 22), and has been growing consistently from day one in a market where prospects are growing exponentially. Agilify puts us at the front of the pack of companies offering consulting and advisory services to others pursuing intelligent process automation.

The hands-on pioneering of the Ministry Service Center has been recognized as an industry leader in the adoption of intelligent process automation. This reputation underpins the brand of Agilify as a business that has proven its ability to innovate with automation. With more than six years of experience in deploying automation using a wide variety of tools, Agilify is poised to serve even more of Ascension and help diversify Ascension’s income through its external business.
Growing our customer experience skill set

We’ve spent considerable time listening to those we serve. That input has sparked numerous improvements in the Ministry Service Center and across our National Ministry. We are making it easier and quicker for associates to get what they need.

In the past year, associate satisfaction increased by 17 percent. That’s a huge increase for one year, and we’re looking for ways to continue that kind of improvement in the year ahead.

A microcosm of One Ascension

At the beginning of the One Ascension initiative, the Ministry Service Center served as “One Ascension 1.0,” connecting our Ministries as they had never been connected before. As Tony Tersigni said a couple of years ago, without what the Ministry Service Center has created, One Ascension would not be possible. Building on that base, we continue to be instrumental in bringing our National Ministry together. We have the people, systems and the momentum to make the real and meaningful changes that are taking us to the reality of One Ascension.

Thank you for your support this past year, and we look forward to working with you in the spirit of collaboration and partnership.

Lee Coulter
Chief Executive Officer
Ascension Ministry Service Center
Ministry Service Center

Services offered:

ASSOCIATE CARE

• Benefits Administration
  • Contact Center
  • Contingent Staffing
• Employee Data Administration for Position, Pay & Personal Data
  • Licensure, Certification & Education
• Garnishments & Specials
  • Payroll
• Time & Attendance
• Taxation & Rewards Administration

PROCURE TO PAY

• Accounts Payable
• Card Program Services
• Requisition & Purchase Order Management
  • Travel & Expense

RECORD TO REPORT

• Accounting Services
  • Fixed Assets
• Lease Administration

SUPPORT SERVICES

• Analytic Support
• Audience Engagement
• Client Delivery Lead
• Program Management Office

2018 YEAR IN REVIEW
A Hub for Collaboration and Problem Solving Across Ascension

Collaboration is the active glue that holds One Ascension together. Instead of a patchwork of hospitals, departments and functions, One Ascension embodies the concept of becoming a cohesive system of standardized processes and best practices, ultimately benefitting Ascension patients as well as its associates.

Growing into collaboration

Seven years ago, Ascension was just beginning its journey to becoming “one.” It was an assembled health-care collection, quilted together with each piece taking the preliminary steps toward centralization and standardization.

As the Ministry Service Center took on the processing for health ministries in the areas of HR, payroll and supply chain services, it faced rapidly escalating scale and unforeseen challenges. Finding solutions has required collaboration among functions, teams and ministries.

In the past year, some of these collaborative efforts included supporting the PeopleSoft upgrade; coping with mergers, acquisitions and divestitures; supporting the MWF Finance transformation; advising on process automation and taking on new services that were previously outsourced.

This problem solving and collaboration have resulted in a Ministry Service Center that now houses over 20 services and is the workplace home for a growing number of people who are not Ministry Service Center employees. Today, the Ministry Service Center is a hub for collaboration and problem solving.
“The Ministry Service Center has been ground zero for many transformations including the Finance transformation. This transformation is a good example of One Ascension coming together to benefit all of us. We are understanding the value to standardization and the opportunities that come along with it.”

*Sara O’Brien—Vice President of Finance and Chief Accounting Officer*
Finance for the future: A streamlined, ministry-wide function

Transforming the financial services that support each ministry into a unified, ministry-wide function has been a massive project in terms of both its scope and impact. It is also a key component in the transition to One Ascension.

“The Ministry Service Center has been ground zero for many transformations including the Finance transformation,” said Sara O’Brien, Vice President of Finance and Chief Accounting Officer. “This transformation is a good example of One Ascension coming together to benefit all of us. We are tearing down the silos and coming together.”

One of the many benefits of the transformation is the ability to leverage skill sets across the enterprise. This will provide all health ministries with deeper, specialized competencies. Examples of competencies that may not have been easily accessible for all health ministries before the transformation include joint venture accounting, and fixed asset management.

Processes are being standardized, improved and then will be assessed to see which ones might be ready for process automation. The Finance team is already using software to automate some tasks, which is expanding productivity, accuracy and compliance.

More Finance associates are being located at the Ministry Service Center. Bringing associates closer in proximity enables greater collaboration and understanding among Finance and the other business service providers located at the Ministry Service Center such as accounts payable.

The Ministry Service Center has been the home to general accounting, payroll and accounts payable, all functions that benefited immediately from centralization. While these back-office functions rarely get noticed, they are critical to the Ascension enterprise and are massive undertakings. Ascension processed nearly $10 billion in payroll last year and processed $13 billion in payables.

Ascension ranks in the top nine percent of all healthcare providers in controlling AP costs. The same is true for costs to process payroll for more than 170,000 associates. Ascension ranks in the top one percent of healthcare providers and in the top 10 percent of all industries for controlling payroll costs.
How Ministry-wide Finance Function Serves One Ascension

BUSINESS INSIGHT

COMPLIANCE

- CAPITAL FINANCE
- FINANCIAL INTEGRITY
- TAXATION

EFFICIENCY

- BUDGET FORECAST
- NET REVENUE MANAGEMENT
- MANAGED CARE
- ACCOUNTING
- BUSINESS SUPPORT ANALYTICS

FINANCE

MINISTRY WIDE FUNCTION
The first successes of Ascension’s preliminary platform include lessons learned and a business solution for solving invoice match exceptions.

Jim Jordan—Market Information Officer

Ascension teams build unique automation platform

In the past year, teams of Ascension associates kicked off a project to build what some have coined “the ultimate widget” – a platform of data and software that could be leveraged by Ascension functions across the enterprise to solve their business problems.

While developed to meet the needs of Ascension, the Enterprise Automation Platform also could be sold to outside organizations.

“There is no company that currently has a platform like this available for Ascension to purchase,” said Jim Jordan, Market Information Officer, Ascension Ministry Service Center. “None of the platforms for sale offer the level of augmented intelligence that we need.”

According to Jim, “The first successes include a business solution for solving invoice match exceptions.” The Ascension Ministry Service Center processes vendor payments for all of Ascension to the tune of $13 billion each year. An average of 34 percent of those invoices must be manually processed by the Ministry Service Center.

“We currently have one type of match exception that is being identified by the system and resolved by a “bot” compared to being processed manually,” said Jim. “In the last few months we have seen the system learn and get smarter on predicting the cause of the match exception.”

The project is requiring teams across Ascension to collaborate on a much larger scale. To build the platform, a cross-functional team including Agilify, Ascension Technologies, Cognitive Scale and the Ministry Service Center had to be assembled with input from technology experts, process owners, process operators and process improvement experts.

“Many lessons have been learned in the areas of organizational change management, data and team collaboration,” noted Jim.
Making It Easier for Ascension Associates to Do What They Do Best—Provide Care

Ascension associates are the “customers” of the Ministry Service Center. Meeting their needs for information and administrative support ultimately helps to enhance the quality of care they can provide.

Chat Now provides associates with a choice

During this past year, the Ministry Service Center introduced a chat function that allows associates to ask questions and get answers from a real person, in real time. Anything that could be done by calling the Ministry Service Center can be done with Chat Now. Unlike calling or email, chatting allows associates to save or print a copy of the chat transcript for reference later. Associates can access the chat function through the my.Ascension.org portal.

Chat is part of a larger Ascension strategic initiative to provide associates with an “omni-channel” experience, offering them multiple options for connecting. This new capability is the result of an intense, collaborative effort involving teams from the Ascension Ministry Service Center and Ascension Technologies.

"Collaboration was critical to the successful launch of our chat functionality," according to Jim Jordan, Market Information Officer, Ministry Service Center. “A project of this magnitude could not have been accomplished without taking full advantage of the shared expertise and insights of everyone involved in its development.”
32 Ministries Served

170,255 Associates Supported
CX is a continuous improvement process – how we take care of Ascension Associates and how they feel about that experience.

Sheila March – Customer Experience Manager

Measuring the customer experience, and improving it

Within the past two years, the Ministry Service Center has adopted a formal methodology for improving the quality of service we provide to Ascension associates. It’s a discipline called Customer eXperience (CX), and it is already generating positive, measurable results.

CX is about gaining a better understanding of the customer’s values, needs and expectations, and then making changes that improve the customer’s experience at every point of contact (called “touchpoints”). CX has its own metrics for determining customer levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction and how those levels are trending for any touchpoint.

Using conceptual tools such as customer personas, empathy maps and customer journey maps, CX allows us to analyze where improvements can be made and to measure and enhance improvements on an ongoing basis.

“Understanding who our customers are and how they interact with us effectively empowers Ministry Service Center associates to better serve our customers,” explained Sheila March, Customer Experience Manager. “It’s a continuous improvement process directed toward how we take care of associates throughout Ascension, and how they feel about that experience.”

Is it working? According to Sheila, “We’ve been able to increase overall satisfaction from 3.1 to 4.2 on a 5-point scale. This is a real testament to our service delivery teams. That’s a huge increase for one year, and it’s just a start. We’re looking for improvement opportunities at every touchpoint in the customer experience.”
A Catalyst for Innovative Business Solutions

Over 330,000 invoices are submitted to the Ministry Service Center for processing each month. With the help of automation, most invoices are processed without any manual intervention. However, about a third of all invoice submissions do not contain accurate information and require some sort of troubleshooting to get them processed. An invoice that cannot be processed is referred to as an “exception.”
Accounts Payable teams innovate to resolve invoice challenges

“The procurement process is complex for an enterprise,” said Scott Etheredge, Senior Director, Procure to Pay. “It requires collaboration among many individuals and teams for the process to work.” Collaborators include The Resource Group, The Ministry Service Center, Ascension Technologies, requestors in the health ministeries and even the suppliers.

“We are making progress, but there is much more to be done,” said Scott. “Today, we know the root causes of exceptions. We are working on solutions to prevent them, but until we get there we have created tools that are helping streamline exception resolution.”

New tools are enabling our associates to process work faster and open up time for them to work on complex problems that require their analytical skills.

Our overall Procure to Pay team has saved over $1.1 million this past year by automating tasks related to payment acceleration, purchase order price updates, daily order tracking, processing back orders, special requestor auto sourcing and statement reconciliation.

Even more interesting is that they have launched Ascension’s first machine learning solution to assist them in identifying match exception problems and solutions.

The Accounts Payable teams at the Ministry Service Center have been leaders in the adoption of digital solutions. These associates have been completing their day-to-day functions while experimenting and implementing new tools to resolve immediate problems.

$13B
in Good & Services Purchased System-Wide

$1.1M
Saved through Accounts Payable Automations

“New tools are enabling our associates to process work faster and open up time for them to work on complex problems that require their analytical skills.”

Scott Etheredge—Senior Director, Procure to Pay
Supplier portal upgrades designed to save time, reduce invoice headaches

Ascension’s Supplier Portal was recently upgraded to improve the supplier customer experience. Several new features include an updated user-friendly interface, improved self-service resources and an automation tool for invoice status inquiries.

“The Supplier Portal is an important milestone in our seven-year program to make our relationships with suppliers fully digital,” said Lee Coulter, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry Service Center. “The new enhancements benefit both health ministry associates and Ascension’s many suppliers, now more than 33,000 system-wide.”

Suppliers often inquire about the status of invoices and payments to both the Ministry Service Center and to individual Health Ministries. Suppliers can now take advantage of self-service options on the portal which means associates can spend more time solving problems instead of digging for details.

“We structured our team and the Supplier Portal to focus on improving the suppliers’ experience and our associates’ experience,” explained Scott Etheredge, Senior Director, Procure to Pay. “With the Supplier Portal, suppliers can now get more of the information they need in an efficient manner. The ultimate goal is to free Ascension Health Ministry associates from answering supplier questions so that they can concentrate on providing the best care possible.”

More improvements to the portal are scheduled for this year. Coulter added, “Our digitization initiatives share one objective: to allow Ascension associates to direct their skills and talents toward providing a better patient experience.”

Scott Etheredge
Process to Pay
Continuous improvement efforts drive performance, adapt to automation

Since its creation, the Ministry Service Center has operated with an attitude of pursuing continuous improvement anywhere that CI can be applied. Tools like Agile project management, Lean Six Sigma and Kaizen projects facilitate collaboration and innovation in the Ministry Service Center.

“Our continuous improvement initiatives continue to have a huge impact on the performance of the Ministry Service Center,” according to Brent Laroche, Manager, Continuous Improvement. “In 2018, we doubled the total savings over the previous fiscal year.”

According to Brent, the Ministry Service Center is using automation to augment the role of the human in the process, not remove the human. “We look at processes end-to-end and look for automation opportunities,” he said. “We don’t assume automation. We go after waste as well as automation.”

The Continuous Improvement Team at the Ministry Service Center has developed two approaches to adapting CI to this new world of process automation. These approaches—Continuous Improvement for automation and Business Analysis for Automation—have been packaged for use by other Ascension entities as well as external customers.

New automations and process improvements originating at the Ministry Service Center have saved Ascension over $4.1M this past year.
Leveraging Our Expertise for Ascension and Others

As an early adopter of intelligent process automation, the Ministry Service Center mastered the skills critical to a successful automation deployment. Those skills turned out to be ones that other organizations needed and desired and were willing to pay to acquire.

“As we began to tell our own story of success, other companies from a mix of industries approached us to find out how we did it,” said Lee Coulter, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry Service Center.

Having led automation transformations in finance, human resources and supply chain, the Ministry Service Center had gained experiences that few in North America had. And thus, those skills were packaged into services that could be leveraged by the entire Ascension enterprise as well as outside customers.

Today, Agilify guides organizations from all industries into this new era of intelligent process automation – a field that’s expected to grow into a $2.5 billion market by 2021. By guiding clients into intelligent automations, Agilify helps organizations reap the benefits of leveraging the combination of human and digital work forces.
“Ascension will always remain Agilify’s most important client.”

Kim Kass—Director, Business Development, Agilify
Unleashing human potential

But, what does Agilify actually do? Agilify provides advisory, consulting and implementation services for organizations looking to quickly and seamlessly master the intelligent automation technology that drives digital transformation.

“Agilify provides training and support services that are essential for companies looking to leverage process automation as quickly as possible,” according to Lynne Riley, Delivery Manager for Agilify. “When companies start their automation journey with us, they get the business agility benefits of intelligent automation, only they get them with faster deployment, instant scalability and lower total entry costs.”

Agilify’s team of experts are experienced automation practitioners who know what it takes to develop automations that meet an organization’s performance and return on investment objectives. Agilify provides both advisory and hands-on guidance at every stage of an organization’s automation initiative, including:
- Identifying the best automation opportunities.
- Setting up a well-defined, well-organized Automation Center of Excellence.
- Performing automation-specific business analysis to determine process suitability and expected return on investment.
- Planning, designing, building and testing the automation.
- Advancing internal team skills through the Agilify Academy.
- Applying Continuous Improvement (CI) disciplines to maximize the automation’s lifetime performance.

Intelligent automation makes “backroom” operations more productive and efficient while reducing costs. Software bots and other digital technologies deliver better transactional speed and accuracy while working 24/7.

“This leaves more time for employees to do what they do best, which is communicating, connecting and collaborating,” said Lee.

And because Agilify is technology agnostic, it has the flexibility to create custom automation solutions that match specific process needs. It has proven that capability in developing more than 100 successful automations for Ascension and other organizations.

“Agilify will benefit Ascension in two ways,” said Kim Kass, Director of Business Development for Agilify. “First, it will help Ascension as it pivots more towards innovative ways to provide the best care both for its patients and associates. Ascension will always remain Agilify’s most important client. Secondly, Agilify will obtain new clients externally that will generate new revenue sources for Ascension as organizations rely on us to help guide them into automation.”

Kim added, “Any expertise we add in Agilify will be used to pursue new automation opportunities within the Ministry Service Center and the broader Ascension base. It’s a win-win.”
Automation streamlines fixed asset accounting

Overview:
The Ascension Ministry Service Center’s Fixed Asset Team has a new tool for the financial management of system-wide fixed assets.

The Problem:
Fixed assets are long-term, tangible assets such as buildings, vehicles and equipment. For an organization as large as Ascension, the continuous, accurate accounting of fixed assets has been a costly and complex challenge. Fixed assets were managed by multiple people in different ministries, all of which had their own systems in place. Associates compiling fixed asset reports were likely to have to work from a half dozen computer screens simultaneously to find and cross-reference the information they needed.

The Solution:
Utilizing its RADILO (Reimagine A Day In the Life Of) concept, Agilify developed a proprietary automation that saves time, reduces reporting discrepancies and streamlines the entire fixed asset accounting process. The automation brings together, on one screen, all the information an associate needs to compile fixed asset values and monitor project costs. It also includes built-in controls to minimize the risk of incorrect entries, increasing the consistency and integrity of the accounting process and the data.

The Impact:
“The RADILO fixed asset automation greatly reduces the time needed to analyze thousands of detail lines per month,” according John Wolf, Accounting Supervisor. “It also gives us unprecedented transparency into our fixed asset numbers, allowing for better, more timely analysis of our capital transactions across the system.”
A Culture that Thrives on Serving Ascension Associates and Patients

It’s a fact: Few organizations would have been able to withstand the furious transformation that Ascension has undergone over the last seven years. From the rapid deployment of Health Ministries across the country onto the Ascension platform to reacting to unforeseen obstacles and challenges, the Ascension Ministry Service Center has been at the center of the Ascension transformation and continues to play a role in creating its future.

The Ministry Service Center operates with one overriding mission: to provide for the administrative and information needs of all Ascension associates so they can focus on what matters most – their patients and communities.

Collaboration, automation and innovation are simply the means to enable the people at the Ministry Service Center to do more for Ascension associates, and do it faster and more efficiently. Every job, every associate working within the Ministry Service Center, plays a vital role in fulfilling Ascension’s mission. These contributions ultimately empower associates and impact the lives of patients throughout the Ascension network.

“The people who work at the Ministry Service Center aren’t just here for the job,” according to Glenn McDonald, Director of Mission Services. “Working as individuals and collaborating as teams, our people are focused on providing the kind of support that frees Ascension associates to concentrate on patient needs.”
“Our mission to serve, on multiple levels, is what we do. And it’s who we are.”

Glenn McDonald – Director, Mission Services

The one constant throughout the Ministry Service Center’s own evolution has been a shared commitment to service. It’s what ultimately binds all of us together and fosters One Ascension.

As Glenn explained, “Our mission to serve, on multiple levels, is what we do. And it’s who we are.”
Innovation in Service is a hallmark of our future

In the near future, the Ascension Ministry Service Center will continue to provide key business services and solutions to Ascension with an eye on continually improving the cost and quality of those services. Some of the more significant areas of service delivery improvement include:

- Digital transformation in accounts payable
- Standardization and optimization of accounting processes
- Expansion of smart financial controls capability

Additionally, the Ministry Service Center will play a role in Ascension’s key enterprise change initiatives – supporting the Human Resources Operations transformation and the Ministry Wide Finance transformation, both of which will extend for numerous months.

And, through Agilify automation products, we will provide Ascension with new streams of revenue from outside customers, while sharing this market-competitive capability with internal Ascension audiences.

The Ministry Service Center began as the foundational hub for standardization and centralization for Ascension. We will continue to evolve our role, expand our capabilities and serve Ascension.

(Left to right)
Tina O’Leary, Agilify Ascension Solutions Delivery
Lynne Riley, Agilify Ascension Solutions Delivery