

THE COMPUTERWORLD HONORS PROGRAM

CASE STUDY

LOCATION:
Austin, Texas, United States

YEAR:
2006

STATUS:
Laureate

CATEGORY:
Business and Related Services

NOMINATING COMPANY:
Dell

ORGANIZATION:

GSD&M Advertising

PROJECT NAME:

IT in Idea City

Summary

GSD&M has experienced explosive growth in the last 10 years. During this time, our client base has grown to include well-known brands such as AT&T, BMW, Tostitos and the U.S. Air Force, all of whom require that we be responsive and deliver work faster than they have been accustomed to in the past.

A part of GSD&M's success with our clients can be attributed to our smart use of technology, both within the IT Department and throughout the Enterprise.

Our goal of standardizing our technology systems and streamlining our leasing process was to free up IT personnel so that they could work on delivering other key enabling technologies of strategic importance for the Enterprise, rather than having to spend a significant part of the day tending to the delivery of basic IT services.

Introductory Overview

GSD&M is a 35-year-old full-service advertising agency with offices in Austin (Idea City), Chicago and New York. We employ 750 people and generate \$1.25 billion in annual billings. Our client base includes Southwest Airlines, Wal-Mart, Chili's, PGA Tour, Fannie Mae, Lennox, MasterCard, AT&T, DreamWorks, UnitedHealth Group, U.S. Air Force, Kohler, AARP, Tostitos, Norwegian Cruise Line, Yellowpages.com and BMW. Our mission statement is "Visionary Ideas that Make a Difference." The following core values, which guide our daily lives, are carved into the floor of our rotunda: Freedom & Responsibility, Community, Integrity, Winning, Restlessness and Curiosity.

As corporate IT professionals in a service-oriented business, we are tasked daily with seeking out and implementing technologies that facilitate the creation and the delivery of work to our clients. Historically, our technology efforts had been focused outside of the IT Department, often ignoring technologies that could be utilized to streamline our IT operations.

For GSD&M's IT Department, an opportunity to implement technologies for ourselves presented itself after IT Management assessed the effort necessary to comply with Omnicom's leasing requirements. Omnicom, GSD&M's parent company, requires that all equipment valued



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at over \$500 be leased. Being new to leasing and not ever having gone through lease returns, we had no idea what we had gotten ourselves into. After going through a few lease refresh cycles in 2003, IT Management realized that there was a significant amount of labor being invested in completing the equipment refresh and lease returns. The effort required to provision and deploy a new system to replace a system going back on lease was estimated to be at two to three hours per system, much more than we desired to spend fulfilling a core IT competency.

As part of our analysis for developing an efficient process we decided to take a page out of Southwest Airlines' playbook and chose to see how we could apply cost-efficiency strategies. Southwest Airlines, GSD&M's longest-term client, uses cost-efficiency strategically, aggressively finding more efficient ways of doing things. At the heart of Southwest's success is its single-platform strategy: Its fleet consists exclusively of aircraft from the Boeing 737 line. In Southwest's case, a common fleet significantly simplifies scheduling, operations and maintenance. Training costs for pilots, ground crew and mechanics are lower, because there's only a single aircraft to learn. Purchasing, provisioning and other operations are also vastly simplified, thereby lowering costs. Southwest's success utilizing a single-platform strategy made perfect sense, and it was key in our decision to standardize our systems. We standardized our IT infrastructure on Dell servers, Dell Optiplex desktops, Dell Latitude laptops and EMC storage systems for the data center. Our goal, as was Southwest Airlines' goal, was to simplify purchasing, provisioning, training and the maintenance of systems.

Secondly, we reviewed a number of Enterprise system management tools and chose to implement Altiris to automate and streamline our system provisioning and deployment processes. Leveraging the tools available in Altiris, we were able to develop one base system image that can be utilized across our entire inventory of desktop and laptop systems. Additionally, Altiris provided us with automation tools that allowed us to capture the computer state of the system being refreshed and to restore the computer state to the new system after the base image had been installed — all of which can be scheduled to run automatically within Altiris and without having to touch an end-user's existing system.

Finally, by leveraging the standardized storage platform and server virtualization technologies, we were also able to significantly reduce the man-hours required to provision new servers when the old servers come up for lease refresh.

Benefits

The time required to provision equipment has been reduced by 75%. This in turn has allowed the IT staff to focus our time and energy toward implementing other key enabling technologies that benefit our employees and our clients.

Our hardware life cycle is now managed within Altiris, giving us one centralized tool to manage all aspects of hardware provisioning and software deployments.

Instead of outsourcing to deliver major projects, we have been able to utilize internal IT resources, who understand our business well, to implement those technologies effectively for our organization.

The application of technology to empower an IT Department so that they can deliver basic IT services efficiently will result in them being able to use their time to implement and deliver other Enterprise level technologies for the organization.



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The Importance of Technology

Standardizing on a single technology hardware vendor for our desktops, laptops and servers allowed us to streamline our purchasing and provided us with a platform upon which we could effectively deploy the Altiris solution. This is important because we no longer spend time comparing equipment across vendor lines. Our leasing relationship with Dell and Dell's ability to deliver equipment quickly puts us in a position where we can control inventory and costs. Dell's just in time delivery allows us to order equipment as needed, and our fixed lease spend allows us to know what costs to expect month after month. Additionally, standardizing on the Dell Optiplex and Latitude platforms allows us to maintain a stable hardware platform that we know won't change over the course of the time that Dell is producing a specific model.

Critical to our success was the implementation of the Altiris solution. It was the key enabling technology that provided us with a centrally managed application upon which we could extend functionality beyond our initial intended use. Altiris allowed us to provide a service-oriented approach to managing our systems across the Enterprise as opposed to applying an ad-hoc approach. Altiris currently allows us to handle all aspects of hardware provisioning as well as inventory management, software management and help desk ticketing, all within a common application framework.

Server virtualization, which is just now starting to become an accepted IT practice, coupled with our standardization on the EMC Storage Area Network (SAN) platform, allows us to rapidly migrate or move servers. With virtualization migrating a server now only requires moving a server image file from the old virtual server to the new virtual server. You don't have to provision a new server from scratch. The EMC SAN facilitates the migration as data no longer has to be moved from one local storage system to another. The existing data on the SAN can easily be presented to the virtual server running on a new physical server.

Originality

Exceptional aspects include the evaluation of Southwest's single-platform strategy and how it could be used within the framework of the problem we were trying to solve, and the early adoption of server virtualization technologies.

Comparatively speaking, our approach to solving our issues is in all likelihood not the first, the best nor the most effective application of its kind. It has been extremely effective though, as it has provided us with the time to focus on technologies outside of the basic IT services all IT departments are responsible. This in turn has allowed us to be consistent, proactive and aggressive in the adoption of enabling technologies.

Success

Our project has exceeded its goal. Over the course of the past two years, GSD&M IT personnel have been able to focus on delivering key enabling technologies for GSD&M such as:

- Harris – Enterprise Agency Suite (Advertising Agency Back Office Software)
- Ultimate Software – UltiPro (HRMS/Payroll)
- AECsoft (Supplier Diversity)



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- Microsoft SharePoint (Team Collaboration Infrastructure)
- Wireless Infrastructures (Data and handheld Voice Over IP)
- Enterprise Blackberry (Mobile Technology Platform)
- Video Conferencing (Communications Platform)
- Microsoft Live Communications Infrastructure (Integrated Instant Messaging Platform)
- Microsoft Live Meeting (On-Line Presentation and Collaboration Platform)
- EMC – Documentum (Digital Asset Management)

Additionally, we were able to leverage Altiris beyond its intended use to also help us manage our leasing contracts and our Help Desk Operations.

Quotes:

David Matathia, Sr. Marketplace Planner – regarding a recent laptop refresh: “Our planning department had very specific needs. We’re “power users”...heavy presentations, video content and tons of data mining. Also, the nature of our jobs has us on the road constantly, so reliability and power were essential. Our existing machines were out-of-date and after a few meetings with our IT teams to explain our needs, they were able to come back with a solution that met all our needs: faster, more memory and longer battery life. Not to mention, a docking station and second monitor option that allowed for more efficient use of multiple documents. Overall, we’re thrilled with what we have.”

Mark Prince, Broadcast Buying Director/Spot Buying – regarding a system refresh: “The conversion was seamless, the computers are fantastic and the training class well done! Your advance planning and responsiveness have been first class all the way. Your efforts allowed us to continue with our daily business without missing a step. Thank you for everything you have done and continue to do.”

Brian Wheelis, VP/Group Media Director/Planning – regarding wireless at Idea City: “Granted I’m a tech junkie, but I just held two client conference calls from the Promotions conference room and was able to make adjustments from the first call to the presentation for the second call in near real-time – and email the revision out to everyone – and access my archives to capture a missing piece - all remotely. This is incredibly liberating! Now if the battery could charge itself by just being near an outlet, I’d be in wireless heaven. Thank you, thank you, thank you! You guys are awesome (which never needs to be said but should be said constantly).”

Chris Allen, VP/Associate Director National Broadcast/Network Buying – Regarding wireless at Idea City: “I used the system earlier this week...it’s another great example of some of the cutting edge technology our IT Department has implemented to help us innovate!”

Maury Giles, VP/Planning Director – regarding a Blackberry equipment upgrade: “OK... you don’t often get notes about the small and simple things that people like. Usually it’s the stuff we don’t like or don’t understand or get ticked off about. So... here’s a thank you for a small and simple thing that goes a long way. Yesterday I got an email from Melissa Moore telling me she had a new Blackberry and wanted to know when I could drop off the old for download, etc. Today she got me the new one up and running. The thank you is for the new device to come my way without me asking or begging for something that is so central to day-to-day work get-



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ting done, etc. That's such a huge statement, at least to me, in a simple way that we care about our people, we're trying to get things done, and we look out for how to help them improve efficiency and even surprise them with new stuff when the time is right, etc. So...thanks! Those simple things mean a lot in loyalty, commitment, and fun...."

Adoption was quick as the IT staff and our end users were immediate recipients of the benefits delivered by our initiatives.

Difficulty

The obstacles were nominal. It was more a matter of making the decision to take a month to focus on IT and to deploy the technologies. Everything else fell in place.

Management has always been supportive. We are fortunate to have top level management that embraces technology and allows IT to drive initiatives that will benefit the Enterprise.