

Affiliated Helps Fire Safety Services Increase Productivity, Reduce Costs and Improve Customer Service with Integrated IT Network and CRM Solution



Introduction

Founded in 1962, Fire Safety Services, Inc. is a provider of firefighting equipment and services to nearly 400 independent fire departments in Ohio. Representing more than 45 manufacturers of quality brand products, the family-owned company is constantly expanding its vast catalog of custom-made fire and safety products, which includes everything from gloves, hoses and small skid units to large aerial ladder trucks. Headquartered in Huntsville, Ohio, Fire Safety Services has built a reputation for providing firefighters with top-of-the-line products and support services.

Aging computer system a drag on profits

Slowly but inevitably Fire Safety Services outgrew its outdated IT system – a single 10-year-old desktop computer that served as a makeshift server handling everything from accounting to sales orders to billing. For the bookkeepers, managers and sales staff, the internal network ran extremely slow and connections were intermittent. Worst still, one email account, hosted remotely, served the entire company of some 20 employees.

While productivity surely suffered, losses in time and money weren't readily apparent. "We got by with the old system because the problems were mostly internal and didn't impact our customers," recalls Shawn Spath, a third-generation manager in the family-owned business. "In hindsight, we lost profits in that our cost of doing business was unnecessarily high."

Affiliated's affordable solution

Spath, motivated by a desire to make life easier for his employees, decided to update the company's troublesome IT environment. He wanted to create a faster, more reliable network with individual email addresses for everyone, without spending a fortune. Budgets were tight. After considering several IT consultants, Spath selected Affiliated because of "their excellent referrals, strong presentation, great maintenance services – and the price was right," he says.

In a matter of days, Affiliated replaced the company's plodding Windows workgroup environment, running off the old computer, with a new high-performance server complete with a domain for more advanced workgroup functions, firewall, tape backup system and individual email for the entire office staff and sales team.

Much more user friendly, the improved internal communications system and network speed would also prove to have a dramatic impact on productivity. "Suddenly no more lost connections, email logs were always available, and we could quickly respond to field requests from our sales force," Spath says. "As a result of the new system, we were able to become more efficient and lower costs."



Challenge

A leading firefighting equipment distributor in Ohio wanted to update its antiquated IT and email system as a way to make it more staff friendly, efficient, and faster.

Solution

Affiliated upgraded the IT network with a high-performance server, new email system, firewall and tape backup system; implemented Microsoft Dynamics CRM; and provided ongoing maintenance services and support through Affiliated OneSource, a managed services solution.

Benefits

Significantly reduces the cost of doing business, saves on IT maintenance labor costs by 50% or more, greatly improves office productivity and email communications internally and with manufacturers, and improves the sales order entry and billing system to facilitate better customer service and cash flow, respectively.

Key solutions and services

Affiliated Strategic IT Plan Review
Affiliated IT Application Review
Affiliated OneSource Managed Services
Microsoft Dynamics CRM

"Taken all together, the new technology has helped us improve our communications and drive down our cost of doing business. We look forward to developing a number of additional capabilities in our system,"


– Shawn Spath, Manager, Fire Safety Services

Streamlined and more efficient

With a scalable, reliable IT platform in place – Affiliated then implemented Microsoft Dynamics CRM, which resulted in business process changes that lowered operating expenses and risks for the fire equipment distributor.


According to Spath, the creation of a centralized customer record which is accessible to both home office and field staff was the single biggest benefit Fire Safety Services realized from the implementation of Microsoft Dynamics CRM. Before, sales and prospect information was stored on individual laptops or in the minds of the sales reps. The disjointed information had a negative impact on both customer service and sales. Spath noted that, “CRM is helping us move from a company where every employee was an island, to becoming very team focused.”

Spath says the Microsoft Dynamics CRM solution has provided Fire Safety Services with the tools and capabilities to position them well into the future. As the business offerings and processes evolve, the flexibility of the system allows them to design solutions around their business rather than designing the business around the system. “Taken all together, the new technology has helped us improve our communications and drive down our cost of doing business. We look forward to developing a number of additional capabilities in our system.”



“Affiliated’s ongoing maintenance service, Affiliated OneSource, not only saves us money in IT labor costs, but they also provides us with the peace of mind that our system is secure, backed up, reliable and available 24/7.”

– Shawn Spath, Manager, Fire Safety Services



“CRM is helping us move from a company where every employee was an island, to becoming very team focused.”

– Shawn Spath, Manager, Fire Safety Services

Ongoing IT support and maintenance with Affiliated OneSource

Going forward, Fire Safety Services contracted with Affiliated for their Affiliated OneSource managed services solution to provide ongoing IT maintenance and support that includes regular site visits, software updates, licensing management, antivirus and data security. Thanks to this ongoing service, Spath believes the company is saving 50 percent or more on labor costs each year, as compared to hiring a full time IT professional to maintain the system.

“We’ve gone from the backend of the technology curve to the leading-edge in our industry,” Spath adds. “That has helped us to reduce business costs dramatically and, in turn, stay ahead of our market in the current economic downturn.”

About Affiliated

Affiliated helps growing and mid-market organizations identify, evaluate and implement technological solutions to improve operational efficiency or increase revenue. Since 1993, Affiliated has assisted hundreds of organizations across many industries to extract greater value from new and existing technology and resources. Affiliated is a 2007 and 2008 Microsoft U.S. Central Region Partner of the Year in Customer Satisfaction and Business Transformation, respectively.

Learn more about how Affiliated can benefit your business.

Call: 614.889.6555
Email: info@aresgrp.com
Visit: www.aresgrp.com

Microsoft®
GOLD CERTIFIED
Partner

2008 Microsoft US Central Region Partner of the Year
SMB Business Transformation - Healthcare

2007 Microsoft US Central Region Partner of the Year
Customer Satisfaction and Experience