CETROM

Case Study:
Cetrom Cloud Computing Saves Association $20,000 in First Year

MHI — Manufactured Housing Institute

Background

The Manufactured Housing Institute (MHI) is a national trade organization that represents and promotes all segments of the manufactured, modular or factory-built housing industry, with a focus on government affairs, and working with congress and federal regulatory agencies. MHI serves its membership by providing industry research, promotion, education and government relations programs, and by building and facilitating consensus within the industry.

Founded in 1936, the organization also offers educational benefits to its members through the Manufactured Housing Educational Institute (MHEI®) which creates and delivers professional programs and resources for the manufactured housing industry.

Headquartered in Arlington, Va., MHI's membership includes nearly 300 companies from fortune 500 enterprises to independent businesses, affiliations with all 50 state-level associations, and nine employees.

Challenges

As with any small, cost-conscious organization, MHI regularly reviews its expenses to determine ways to improve efficiency or reduce excess spending within the organization. A prominent source of recurring costs was the IT infrastructure the company housed onsite. With multiple servers, software purchases and licensing, and day-to-day maintenance and upkeep, the organization's technology needs put a strain on both finances and resources for the organization.

In addition, because MHI is headquartered within the Washington, D.C. metro area, employees are faced with some of the longest commutes in the nation and frequent traffic congestion. With all of the organization's IT resources housed on-premise at the Arlington office, there was little flexibility for instituting telecommuting options for employees.

Solution

In 2008, MHI decided it was time to find a way to reduce the expenses associated with its IT infrastructure and contacted Cetrom to investigate options for a fully outsourced, customized cloud computing solution.

"We started evaluating different solutions and found that cloud computing was a very attractive option because we would not be responsible for onsite server maintenance or software licensing and updates," said Laura Lee, Controller and VP of Finance & Administration for MHI.

Cetrom designed a fully outsourced IT solution for MHI based completely in the cloud. This

At a Glance:

Background

- Headquartered in Arlinton, Va., the Manufactured Housing Institute (MHI) was founded in 1936.
- A national trade organization that represents and promotes the factory-built housing industry.
- MHI has nearly 300 members, 50 state-level affiliations, and nine employees.
- www.manufacturedhousing.org

Challenges

- A tight budget made it difficult to justify capital expendirtures for hardware upgrades and software licensing.
- Ongoing efforts to improve efficiency and reduce excess spend identified IT as a primary target for evaluation.
- Washington D.C. traffic created some of the longest commute times in the nation.

Solution

- Fully outsourced and customized cloud computing solution from Cetrom.
- Maintenance and upkeep is managed by technology experts, so MHI can focus on its membership and mission.
- Knowledgeable senior engineers ensure 99.9 percent uptime and speedy response to service tickets.

Results

- Utility-based pricing allows for monthly expenses rather than large annual investments, amounting to a cost savings of $20,000 per year.
- Flexibility of anytime, anywhere access offers telecommuting and relocation options, resulting in increased employee retention.

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means that all of the organization's technology resources are hosted on Cetrom's best-in-class technology infrastructure which boasts a 99.9 percent uptime guarantee. Employees can access these resources anytime they need them, from any location, with only an internet connection and a computing device.

The cloud computing solution included the latest version of the Microsoft® Office Suite and a membership database hosted in Cetrom IT's tier-4, SAS 70-compliant data center. The data center offers round-the-clock, enterprise-level, physical and logical security to ensure all the data and applications are safe and protected. Opposite coast redundancy and multiple back-up power sources create a high-availability environment that supports a strong disaster recovery plan.

In addition, Cetrom technology experts have taken full responsibility for the day-to-day maintenance and upkeep of the entire IT solution, which means MHI now has IT support 24x7x365. This includes software licensing and updates, daily troubleshooting, virus protection, daily backup and preventative care to ensure all MHI's resources are always working properly. In the event that an issue does arise, MHI's employees have direct access to highly responsive, senior engineers who resolve the situation in a timely manner.

"Outsourcing all of our technology resources has enabled MHI to focus entirely on the needs of our membership and furthering our mission," Lee continues. "Cetrom's round-the-clock customer service has been outstanding and all the engineers have been really helpful."

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Microsoft Partner
Gold Hosting
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Results

With the move to a cloud computing solution, MHI has not only seen a reduction in annual expenses for IT, but also an increase in employee retention due to the flexibility and accessibility of the solution.

Utilizing a cloud computing platform has essentially created virtual offices for employees to utilize from any location that accesses the same applications and data that they use in the office. This has enabled MHI employees to telecommute one or two days a week alleviating the stress related to commuting in the D.C. metro area. The benefit of a virtual office became particularly apparent for MHI when an employee of 25 years had to relocate, for personal reasons, to Indiana. Pairing the cloud computing solution with a VoIP phone system allowed this employee to seamlessly continue working for MHI.

However, the most prominent benefit of the cloud for MHI is the cost savings. By working with Cetrom, the company no longer has to plan large capital budgets to purchase servers and software licenses. This has saved the organization over $20,000 in the first year alone since moving to the cloud. Going forward, this number will only increase as MHI avoids the inevitable annual expenses of a full-time, in-house IT manager such as raises, bonuses and escalating benefit costs.

Lee concludes, "For an organization that needs a good technology solution, but struggles with a tight budget, cloud computing makes perfect sense. As a member-based organization, we are stewards of our members' money and the cloud allows us to manage it more responsibly, while maintaining our commitment and dedication to serving our membership."

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