

Consulting Firm Benefits from Smart Services

Managed Market Resources get proactive, cost-effective care from Cisco partner Alliant Technologies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Managed Market Resources

- Industry: Healthcare
- Location: Mt. Olive, New Jersey
- Number of Employees: 16

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Cost-effectively maintain network availability without internal IT support
- Provide clients with on-demand access to consultants

SERVICES SOLUTION

- Managed network service through Cisco partner

BUSINESS RESULTS

- Greater business continuity
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Lower network costs

TECHNOLOGY/APPLICATION PARTNER

- Alliant Technologies

Business Challenge

Managed Market Resources (MMR) is a small, full-service consulting company to pharmaceutical companies who need help navigating the large, regulated, and demanding world of managed market healthcare. Their clients are pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical companies, and their specialty is delivering comprehensive solutions for cost-effectively reimbursing patients for a variety of drugs. The work involves extensive market research, strategic planning, and close collaboration with clients to thoroughly understand their priorities and business challenges.

In 2006, MMR had 40 employees staffing offices in Chesapeake, Virginia and Mt. Olive, New Jersey. Two full-time IT professionals managed a Cisco network that included the Cisco® Unified Communications IP telephony call-processing system. The company considered its consolidated network critical to its success. Client satisfaction demanded ready accessibility to consultants, and consultant productivity and quality of service required absolutely

reliable network resources. "Our phones and our network are our life. If either one of those are interrupted, we're in trouble," says Steven Bauwens, chief operating officer of MMR.

In 2007, changes in the pharmaceutical industry led to a financial downturn and it no longer made sense to maintain two offices. When MMR closed its Virginia office, neither of its IT professionals elected to make the move to New Jersey. Researching the cost of hiring a full-time IT manager in the new location revealed that outsourcing IT services was a more cost-effective option. At that point, MMR turned to Cisco partner Alliant Technologies, based in nearby Morristown, New Jersey, for network management help. Alliant is a certified IT engineering and operations firm offering integrated, multi-vendor IT infrastructure solutions.

Alliant added network monitoring and management to the Cisco SMARTnet® Service technical support contracts already in place. The combination of SMARTnet and managed network services worked well, but MMR was still paying for several, separate Cisco support contracts in addition to the Alliant network monitoring services. The challenge was finding a way to continue working with Alliant and enjoying the same high level of service at a competitive price.

“Once Alliant called and asked if we had a network problem. Two minutes later, the service level dropped. They were fixing the problem before it even happened.”

– Steven Bauwens, Chief Operating Officer, Managed Market Resources

Services Solution

With some SMARTnet contracts expiring and an imminent need to upgrade the unified communications system, Alliant realized that it could bring even greater value to MMR with a comprehensive offering based on Cisco Smart Care. Where SMARTnet provides individual maintenance contracts for each product, Smart Care manages the maintenance of all Cisco products in the network under a single contract and adds features such as reporting and software updates.

Alliant sells Cisco Smart Care capabilities within its Alliant Managed Service (AMS) SmartWatch added-value package. AMS SmartWatch offers expert 24x7 monitoring and technical support directly from AMS, backed by technical support and hardware replacement by Cisco. AMS SmartWatch helps Alliant provide the proactive care that MMR needs to maintain network availability and business continuity.

MMR immediately recognized how Smart Care could bridge the gap between maintaining individual devices on a break/fix basis and enjoying a highly efficient process that supported day-to-day business with proactive management. “When we first talked to MMR about Smart Care, they were excited,” says Dan Cirelli, director of business development, Alliant Technologies. They knew they needed it, and the small price difference between SMARTnet and Smart Care made it an easy decision.

AMS SmartWatch also tracks equipment lifecycles, licensing, software upgrades, critical software patches, security updates, and more. No additional equipment is required at the MMR site. Communication is handled through a standing virtual private network (VPN). “SmartWatch is a real solutions-oriented package for us; we don’t have to worry about anything. It’s all-inclusive,” says Bauwens.

MMR financed the update of its unified communications server and phone software using financing from Cisco Capital, and replaced SMARTnet with AMS SmartWatch that is also billed monthly. “The financing was very favorable to us and very affordable,” says Bauwens. “Without the Cisco financing, I’m not sure we would have been able to do the upgrades that we did.”

Business Results

For MMR, AMS SmartWatch supports seemingly conflicting goals: controlling costs while maintaining the highest network availability and taking advantage of new technology and upgrades.

The cost control benefits start with the fact that AMS SmartWatch is far less expensive than a full-time IT professional. “We know the cost of salary and benefits for a certified IT specialist in this area, and we’re substantially south of that using SmartWatch and our relationship with Alliant,” says Bauwens.

Along with reduced costs, MMR is enjoying the benefits of moving from manual contract management and a break/fix mentality to automated support, proactive capabilities, and full lifecycle management. “Once Alliant called and asked if we had a network problem,” says Bauwens. “Two minutes later, the service level dropped. They were fixing the problem before it even happened.”

Automated support systems are critical because MMR depends on their network 24 hours per day. Employees often work after normal business hours, and a support person might not know immediately if there was a network problem. Bauwens explains that with Alliant and AMS SmartWatch, the whole system is monitored even when people are not in the building. "Alliant notifies me by phone immediately about any network issues, so I can tell my senior team. That way we don't promise something to a client and find ourselves unable to deliver."

Although fixing issues fast is an important advantage, the proactive care that Alliant provides with the help of AMS SmartWatch also offers network and business benefits. Network benefits focus primarily on preventing issues from affecting operations. "At one point we found that an MMR router was at 90 percent capacity due to a configuration issue," says Cirelli. "We worked with Cisco TAC and implemented a fix within the maintenance window."

On the business side, AMS SmartWatch supports proactive maintenance such as lifecycle management, which facilitates efficient budgeting. If an end-of-lease date is approaching, for example, MMR is notified in time to determine the best upgrade path and integrate that planning into the capital budget for the next year. Budgeting is also simplified by the Cisco Capital financing. The set monthly payment helps MMR budget overall expenses more effectively.

With lower costs and more information to support financial planning, MMR has greater freedom to provide its consultants with the state-of-the-art technology that they need to offer clients the best possible service.

Next Steps

With the addition of AMS SmartWatch, MMR achieved its primary goals of reducing costs, avoiding network problems, and keeping communications flowing. But that does not mean the company has stopped looking at new technology. "We've asked Alliant to keep us informed about the newest and greatest technology," says Bauwens. "Our network is vital to our business, so we want to be as cutting edge as we can afford to be."

For More Information

To find out more about the Cisco Smart Services, please visit: www.cisco.com/go/smartcare

To find out more about the Alliant Technologies, please visit: www.allianttech.com

To find out more about MMR, please visit: www.managedmarketresources.com



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Printed in USA

C36-678617-01 08/11