



The Rutherford Companies Focuses IT Resources on Strategic Initiatives

Challenge

Corporate Profile

The Rutherford Companies is one of the 100 largest independently-owned insurance brokerage, risk-management and business support services firms in the U.S.

Rutherford has twelve offices in six states, and services clients across the U.S.

While looking to maintain high levels of client satisfaction and expand its service offerings, Rutherford faced a serious organizational obstacle. The internal IT staff was forced to devote time to supporting Rutherford's existing technology infrastructure across geographically dispersed offices, rather than helping grow the business.

Taking a holistic view of Rutherford's business to determine how its IT staff could provide competitive efficiencies across the insurance value chain revealed that maintaining a cost effective, stable and secure IT infrastructure provided little additional time to attempt higher end goals.

"Maintaining the basic technology 'plumbing' is not the highest and best use of internal IT professionals," explained Gerry Samchuck, Rutherford's Vice President of Information Systems and Technology. "IT professionals are far more valuable combining their understanding of business operations with their knowledge of emerging information technologies to help the business become more efficient and more responsive to clients' needs."

Beyond equipment and personnel data, evaluating Rutherford's total cost of its IT systems included a range of intangible costs that were harder to quantify but equally important to determining the best course of action:

- Employees taking on de facto IT support responsibilities for their peers even though their function "on paper" was to provide customer service.
- Lost efficiencies and downtime from having to use older hardware and software because conversions were too labor-intensive.
- Lost time waiting for stretched IT resources to respond to help requests.
- Inadequate breadth and depth of resources to deal with disruptions in a timely manner or to forecast capacity requirements.

Both the tangible and intangible costs translated into lower productivity and presented a barrier to Rutherford's overall growth.

Solution

"mindSHIFT has done an excellent job of putting together best-in-class software and quality business processes to provide a world-class level of IT support that surpasses even large corporations with enormous IT budgets."

Gerry Samchuck,
Vice President,
Information Systems
and Technology,
Thomas Rutherford,
Inc.

mindSHIFT migrated Rutherford's network infrastructure to Windows 2000 with Active Directory Services and Microsoft Exchange 2000. mindSHIFT now provides comprehensive IT support services to Rutherford that includes:

- Management of LAN, servers, and workstations
- Management of software applications including their insurance agency management application, AMS Sagitta
- Management and administration of email
- Nightly offsite backup of servers and workstations
- Comprehensive network security
- Virus and spam filtering
- Redundant internet access and wide area networking
- 24 x 7 network monitoring of the entire infrastructure
- 24 x 7 help desk support for all users
- Management of Rutherford's private Frame Relay network
- Secure remote access for mobile users and remote offices

Results

mindSHIFT has enabled the Rutherford IT staff to focus on revenue-generating enhancements. The decision to implement a mindSHIFT solution is expected to improve Rutherford's corporate productivity by 20%. "We know mindSHIFT's solution will grow with us as our company expands its customers and services," added Samchuck. "In fact, we now anticipate that Rutherford's IT spending will decline as a percentage of total revenue during the next few years."

Executives and board members who were initially skeptical now appreciate the long-term savings potential and the substantial technological improvements. "Because the mindSHIFT solution will enable us to increase productivity, enhance client satisfaction and develop additional revenue opportunities without increasing our true expenditure on IT, the executive leadership and the board is sold," stated Samchuck.

"Now that mindSHIFT is in place--after a remarkably smooth transition--our internal IT employees are now focused on the creation of automated business processes, e-services for our clients, and automated value-chains," said Shad Steadman, Executive Vice President of Rutherford. "The change post-mindSHIFT was dramatic. We immediately began to implement projects that had languished on the wish list for years, and we have been able to provide new services to clients in rapid fashion. *Our IT department is now an ASSET of the business and a true competitive advantage.*"