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Shawn Faulkingham
Director of IT

ABOUT GOOGLE APPS

Google Apps is a suite of applications that includes Gmail, Google Calendar (shared calendaring), Google Talk (instant messaging and voice over IP), Google Docs & Spreadsheets (online document hosting and collaboration), Google Page Creator (web page creation and publishing) and Start Page (a single, customizable access point for all applications). Google Apps offers editions tailored to specific customer needs, including the Standard Edition (ideal for family domains), Education Edition (K-12 schools, colleges and universities) and Premier Edition (businesses of all sizes).

Visit www.google.com/a for more information.

Google Apps Premier Edition helps Indoff manage email more effectively while improving collaboration among staff.

Business

Success in business requires a lot of behind-the-scenes activity: products must be moved and stored, offices must be furnished, supplies must be procured, and promotional products must be created to generate sales, motivate employees or enhance branding. That’s where Indoff comes in. The company distributes office interiors, products and promotions through 400 Sales Partners in 45 states and Mexico. “We’re a little like Staples without the storefront,” explains director of IT Shawn Faulkingham. “Our Sales Partners order products, we drop-ship them and our Sales Partners maintain the direct relationship with the customer.”



Approach

As a distributor exchanging information with hundreds of partners every day, Indoff depends on email. Indeed, email is the company’s primary mode of communication. According to Faulkingham, “On any given day, our employees and Sales Partners – 500 users in all – exchange some 200,000 emails.”

Before switching to Google Apps, the company used a server-based solution that fell short when it came to handling high volumes of electronic communications. “In this business, our partners don’t tolerate getting an email six hours late, or not receiving one at all,” Faulkingham says.

Solution

Upon testing Google Apps, Indoff realized that it would be fast and easy to use, and could also deliver exceptional uptime and reliability. Within two weeks, Indoff’s employees and sales partners had moved over to Google Apps. Today, they all use Gmail, either via Google’s web interface or via POP access.

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Indoff liked that Google Apps offers guaranteed uptime, relieves IT staff of having to worry about hosting communication and collaboration solutions in-house, and ensures that anyone using Google Apps has to give explicit permission prior to sharing information. Indoff also liked that it could trust Google. “Google’s privacy policies are beyond reproach, so we know we are in good hands,” says Faulkingham.

Since switching to Google Apps, Indoff has enjoyed significant benefits in addition to an improved email system. Using the Start Page as the entry point to all the Google Apps communication and collaboration tools, Indoff employees turn to Docs & Spreadsheets for tracking projects, Google Calendar for keeping everyone's schedules in sync, and Google Talk to engage in real-time virtual communication (something that really comes in handy for support personnel untangling technical issues). "We used Docs & Spreadsheets to migrate to Google Apps, keeping track of progress, usernames, passwords, issues and more," says Faulkingham. "I foresee the collaboration tools in Google Apps growing in importance for us as our sales partners start to use Docs & Spreadsheets to collaborate with vendors, customers and folks here at corporate."

Results

According to Faulkingham, the migration to Google Apps was "very simple and painless." Since the move, Indoff's operations have run more smoothly; thanks to the uptime Google Apps provides, Indoff's IT group, other employees and Sales Partners all find they're able to spend less time dealing with communication issues and more time focusing on more strategic work. Gmail's powerful spam filters have also increased productivity. And by giving Google Apps communication and collaboration tools to its far-flung network of partners, Indoff has made it easier for everyone to stay on the same page regardless of physical location.

In addition, Google has helped lower the company's cost of operations. According to Faulkingham, "Google Apps is incredibly robust and can handle a large volume of emails, and at \$50 per user, we're saving tens of thousands each year in both hard and soft costs."

