Hub City Media increased billable hours by outsourcing communications and collaboration with Google Apps Standard Edition

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>
> **Steve Giovanetti**
> Founder and Chief Technology Officer

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 (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.

Business

Hub City Media is a web application and software development company that builds mission-critical applications for clients ranging from Fortune 500 pharmaceutical companies to small software concerns and fledgling web companies. "We're a boutique firm, with expertise that spans the entire development cycle, from project inception to software deployment and maintenance," explains Founder and Chief Technology Officer Steve Giovanetti.

Approach

As a tight-knit, technology-focused organization, Hub City Media relies heavily on email as well as instant messaging and shared calendars to coordinate efforts and keep projects on track. "Our aim is to devote as much time and attention as we can to our customers, versus maintaining our own infrastructure," states Giovanetti.

Since its inception, Hub City Media has maintained its own email system – open source software running on in-house servers. But managing an email system has meant far more than just setting up servers and configuring DNS. "Ongoing spam and antivirus updates alone were daunting," recalls Giovanetti. "We found we had to dedicate half a person per month to maintain our email infrastructure. We knew our time could be spent more productively – and more profitably – working on customer solutions."

Along with alleviating this administrative burden, Hub City wanted to find integrated collaboration solutions, including instant messaging and shared online calendars. The company uses a mixed Mac/PC environment, and found that some people couldn't open meeting invitations and IM options didn't work consistently. "We wanted to bring everyone onto the same page," says Giovanetti.

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Solution

Early on, Giovanetti tried Gmail for personal use, and was impressed with its stability, ease of use and advanced features. He decided to adopt Google Apps as soon as it became available as a service for businesses. "We'd been passing around the task of administering email, and it was a double penalty for us – there was the up-front cost, but also the fact that staff members were not billable while they were maintaining our internal infrastructure," recalls Giovanetti. "We jumped at the chance to implement Google Apps."

Results

Since turning on Google Apps, Hub City Media operations have relied on Gmail, Google Talk and Google Calendar – and this common communications platform has helped produce markedly increased productivity.

According to Giovanetti, moving to Google Apps was as easy as flipping a switch and has made sense from a long-term business standpoint. Giovanetti is enthusiastic about the software as a service (SaaS) model for communication and collaboration, especially for small businesses like Hub City. "Outsourcing commodity functions like email is an idea whose time has come," he says. "Why put the time and expense into running and maintaining email and collaboration systems in-house when Google has a large, talented staff of programmers who are continually improving Google Apps?"

For Giovanetti and staff, using Google Apps has been a "very good experience" – one that has freed more time for profitable work and enhanced teamwork. Communication and collaboration systems are more integrated and operate more consistently, regardless of what platform an employee or client uses. Google Apps, Giovanetti notes, helps Hub City staff collaborate with the wider world. "Google Calendar processes invitations virtually flawlessly among a variety of calendaring systems," he says, "reducing our cycles for scheduling meetings and other activities."

As a next step, Hub City Media has begun using Google Docs to share ideas. The team writes notes for proposals, for instance, and then invites everyone involved to join in on the discussion – just one more way that this small company is making the most of its resources using Google Apps. "The drudgery of maintaining our own infrastructure is gone, which leaves us more time to generate new concepts and spend time more profitably," concludes Giovanetti.

As technology experts creating custom software solutions for large and small companies alike, Hub City Media keeps its focus on customers. And Google Apps Standard Edition enables Hub City to spend more time working with customers and less time on tasks like email administration.