WirelessUSA

COMPANY BACKGROUND

WirelessUSA is a Motorola two-way radio Value Added Reseller and service agency. Founded in 1962, they now have eight locations in Missouri and Illinois. Two-thirds of their customer base consists of first responders – police departments, fire departments, and ambulance and emergency services. The remaining one-third of their customers consists of industrial/commercial firms.

BUSINESS SITUATION

The firm's strategy and operations are driven by information gleaned from their computer software. That has been the case for a long time. In 1977 the firm had already automated nearly every aspect of the business - payroll, accounts receivable, accounts payable, general ledger, and their own customized service operations - all running on DEC hardware. By the mid 1990's the DEC operating system was no longer supported. The firm had to make a change.

The specific way in which WirelessUSA stores and uses data to support their business decision making is an integral part of their strategy. There are 750,000 service events in their database and the ability to study the history of individual pieces of equipment and equipment types for proper maintenance procedures and to access installation information is critical for sales and customer support. During an emergency, a fireman needs to know that his communications equipment has been properly maintained.

Customers rely on WirelessUSA to keep them apprised of events that might affect their radio systems. For example, because of narrowing the channel frequency band from 25 kilohertz to 12.5 kilohertz the FCC has mandated that effective January 1, 2013 radio equipment of a certain age will no longer be useable. Because WirelessUSA stores customers' historical data, they can inform their customers if they own any of the equipment affected by the standards change. WirelessUSA operates in a very competitive market and service can determine a firm's success or failure. WirelessUSA's level of knowledge and ability to offer superior support helps differentiate the firm from its competitors.

SOLUTION

According to Robert Taylor, WirelessUSA's CEO, there were 3 compelling reasons to use the Fitrix software. "It provided us the functionality we needed for much of our operations, we got the source code so we could customize applications to support our competitive strategy, and Fourth Generation was the right size for us. They're big enough to provide us the level of service and support we want, but small enough that we get their attention when we need it. We didn't want to be a little fish in a big pond."

WirelessUSA uses the Fitrix modules for Order Entry, Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, and General Ledger and they have developed in-house a custom module using the Fitrix RAD Tools to automate their service operations. This module is fully and seamlessly integrated into the Fitrix product and uses the same technology and has exactly the same look and feel. They will soon implement the CRM module, in which they were influential in helping to develop. This module will integrate into their service and sales operations. Their internal staff handles most of the Fitrix support. The firm has one fulltime employee who manages the network and three part time programmers.

Taylor's focus on customizing Fitrix to buttress his strategy has paid dividends. "For so many ERP packages you get what you get," says Taylor. "Customizing the software is either impossible or too costly to undertake. With Fitrix, we've customized how the software works to fit our needs. Here's a good example. The FCC issues licenses for the use of radio systems. If you program a radio to transmit on a frequency you don't have a license for the FCC will fine you. When a customer wants to use a frequency on a radio purchased from us we have to check the FCC database to be sure they have a license for that frequency. This used to be a cumbersome process. With the Fitrix CRM package we now can store the customer's license information and through Internet Explorer can access the FCC database and run the check in seconds. The ability to customize the software for something like that is fundamental to our business."

RESULTS

WirelessUSA continues to prosper in a rough economy by providing a higher level of service and support to their customers. Robert Taylor attributes the firm's continued success to aligning his information needs with his strategy. "A few years ago there were 5 Motorola dealers like us in the St. Louis area. We're the only one left. I believe that part of this is because we're able to make better decisions. When I price equipment I know its real cost – I think everyone else was just guessing. The ability to make more accurate pricing decisions gave us a significant competitive advantage. It all ties back to the quality of our data and the flexibility that Fitrix provides us in how to store and retrieve it in a way that is useable and fits our needs."

WirelessUSA continues to look for ways to leverage its data and the Fitrix software to better serve its market. An option that Taylor is now considering is adding an interface to the software to support the firm's rental department. One requirement would be that it integrates to the Fitrix infrastructure.

Fitrix provides WirelessUSA with the core ERP features and functionality needed to operate the business and the flexibility through access to the source code and Rapid Application Development Tools to tailor the software to support their business strategy.

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