

Client: American Traditional Designs

Leveraging technology to compete in a growing craft industry

For twenty-five years, American Traditional Designs has supplied the craft industry with high quality paper crafting, scrapbooking, home décor and stationary products. The company serves major craft chains and retailers across the country, including Michaels and A.C. Moore. Products include papers, stickers, rub-ons, metal embellishments, embossing templates, stencils and more. As mainstream national retailers begin to add scrapbooking products to their shelves, American Traditional Designs is positioned to leverage the growing \$3 billion market.

Challenge: Sluggish network performance affects business operations.

Competing in such a dynamic business environment requires efficient internal procedures. In an industry hesitant to incorporate new technologies, American Traditional Designs takes advantage of computer and networking systems to work more productively, using technology to create a competitive edge.

“We pride ourselves on being a technology leader in our industry,” said Michael Barker, president and CEO of American Traditional Designs. “We rely on our network to support critical activities, including inventory control, accounting software, order entry, and the MRP system. It’s not data-intensive, but it is critical. Our computer systems must perform consistently and reliably to support those applications—when you’re down, you can’t do business.”



However, the company recently experienced ongoing performance issues. The network simply wasn’t functioning properly, with one segment or the other constantly down. As the foundation for operating business applications, constant network downtime directly affected company productivity.

In addition, American Traditional Designs soon found they did not have the storage capacity available to handle the large graphics files their team of designers required. Graphics files took minutes to open, delaying the designers from performing their work. These huge files also bogged down the network, adding to the slow network performance.

“Our first priority was to get the network functioning properly to support our employees and applications,” commented Barker. “Secondly, we wanted to increase performance and enhance access for our graphic designers. We needed a new technology vendor—one with the ability to resolve issues quickly and the knowledge to address our needs strategically.”

Solution: Improved & reliable network service increases productivity by 10%.

American Traditional Designs selected Portsmouth-based Daystar Computer Services, Inc. to provide networking services, hardware procurement and technology consulting services. In order to get the network running properly, Daystar completed an evaluation of the craft company’s entire computer infrastructure, which included five servers, approximately thirty PCs, a wireless network, and a Sonic firewall.

The majority of the network’s problems stemmed from the core of the infrastructure. One of the five servers was not functioning, taxing the other four. Ironically, this server was relatively new. Furthermore, the remaining four servers were behind in server patches and updates, missing critical upgrades that would enable them to run more efficiently. The bad server was removed and sent back to the previous vendor, and the company enlisted Daystar engineers to custom-build a new server specifically designed to their specifications. In addition, Daystar cleaned out the remaining servers and installed all outstanding upgrades and patches to ensure they operated at top speed.

Aside from the servers, the evaluation uncovered problems spanning out to the PCs. Every PC contained spyware, software that transmits personally identifiable information about the user without their knowledge. In addition to privacy concerns, spyware slows the performance of a PC and network. Daystar engineers removed spyware from each PC, and added tools to protect them from future infection. Furthermore, a haphazard variety of anti-virus software was installed across the company, which was easily remedied by standardizing all PCs on Norton Anti-virus protection.

To address the lack of space for large graphic files, Daystar implemented a ¾ terabyte storage unit. The system contains 720 Gigabits of storage, enabling designers to access files more quickly. The unit is also upgradeable to allow for additional space once the designers fill it up with new craft designs.

“With improved network performance, we can work more efficiently, taking full advantage of the systems we have in place,” said Barker. “And our graphic designers are able to access files much more quickly with the new storage unit. Overall, the network has increased company productivity by 10%.”

To make certain that American Traditional Designs’ network continues operate smoothly, Daystar engineers will perform periodic remote server and PC maintenance. The ongoing maintenance program will ensure that all updates, software upgrades and security patches are installed in a timely manner to protect the craft company’s systems and enable them to function at optimal performance.

“American Traditional Designs is a technology-forward craft company. We rely on our network to help us perform more competitively. Therefore, when we have a problem, we need someone on site right away with a solution,” concluded Barker. “Daystar gives us the response time and the expertise we require. They always come through with a solution when we need them.”



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