

Spicing things up.

How a new move to the cloud revitalized the role of technology at Spicers Canada.

Microsoft Growing Business Success Story

Who's Spicers?

Without even knowing it, there's an excellent chance that you've held printed material, seen a display or picked up a package that's been brought to you along the way by Spicers (spicers.ca). As one of the nation's biggest distributors of fine paper, graphic supplies, displays and industrial packaging products and equipment, Spicers has a 70 year history of servicing organizations across Canadian industry. 500 employees operating from 15 offices from coast to coast make Spicers a force in their field.

The Challenge

Following the PaperlinX sale of its US affiliates in 2012, Spicers Canada set out to build an independent information technology platform for its Canadian business and, in the process, to maximize its technology investment – quickly and efficiently. Working with an existing cloud solution, Spicers Canada maintained numerous, segregated software licensing agreements, a mishmash of hardware assets (from servers and desktops to laptops and smart phones) and an IT culture that had become reactive.



The Solution

Veteran IT pro Jeff Ardielli joined the IT ranks at Spicers Canada and partnered up with IT consultants VI Professional Solutions Inc. (vipros.net). With Spicers' operational and cultural goals top of mind, the revitalized Spicers tech team swiftly A) completed an IT audit; B) developed a new IT vision and roadmap; and C) executed their plan, moving the company to a new generation of technology *in just four months*. Along the way, Ardielli set into place new "IT as a service" philosophy within Spicers Canada.

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Ardielli explains: "Establishing a proactive, collaborative and strategic approach to how Spicers manages its technology was the big win. We zeroed in on the total cost of ownership, consolidating licensing and assets, implementing a 'cloud-to-cloud' migration and making the business case to reinvest the savings our new plan realized into a more powerful, agile, secure and—above all—user-centric set of solutions. In a nutshell, technology works for Spicers and its staff today, not the other way around."

Spicers

★ The Benefits

- Spicers' "cloud to cloud" migration has reduced technology hard costs by over 60%, allowing the company to reinvest into new platforms, devices and training.
- The consolidation of software licensing, in part through an Open Value Subscription (Level C) agreement, allows for far easier management and significant cost savings.
- Software Assurance now allows for universal updates of Office 365 and other key Microsoft platforms, which keeps Spicers' technology cutting edge.
- The consolidation of desktops, laptops, tablets and other hardware to one vendor has optimized performance and reduced maintenance costs.
- Migrating to Windows Server 2012 with Hyper-V allowed Spicers to move from 40 servers to three, translating into reduced costs and a world-class cloud infrastructure.
- Windows Intune now allows Spicers to track, manage and optimize all PCs, tablets and mobile devices (Windows, Apple and Android) in the cloud, easily.
- Spicers' staff, including its sizable mobile sales force, now has access to the latest technology to get everything they need from the road, office or home.

Concludes Ardielli: "The real benefit of this new move to the cloud has been cultural. We've broken down the walls between groups. There's an enthusiasm about the role of technology again and an appetite to see what platforms like Windows 8, Surface, SharePoint and Yammer can do for us. We don't dictate change on our workforce. Instead, we invite staff to share their needs with us and then put forward new options and best practices to meet those needs and align with business goals. It's exciting!"

! The Learning

A success story like Spicers' offers insights for a company of any size, most notably:

1. Take Stock.

Don't be complacent about the technology you use. Auditing what you use (and pay for) is a great way to determine value and find operational and cost efficiencies.

2. Plan, Plan, Plan.

Developing a new vision, inspired by business goals and informed by expert third-party expertise, allows for swift deployment and minimizes disruption.

3. Communicate!

Take the time to engage your staff, not just management. Show people what's possible and explain the benefits. Ask for feedback and take a collaborative approach.

4. Put People First.

Put user goals at the centre of everything you do. Make user-friendliness a top priority. Invest in training. And adopt an "IT as a service" philosophy internally.

5. Get Creative. Think big.

Tap technology suppliers and leaders for new ideas and approaches. Pilot new technology. Lead change, don't resist it. Be passionate and positive!

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