Golf Cart Company Hits a Birdie with Cloud

At marinas, corporate campuses, industrial facilities and golf courses across New Jersey, Vic Gerard Golf Carts keeps its customers on the move with high quality golf carts and utility vehicles. But like many businesses of its size, the Farmingdale, NJ-based company poured most of its resources into staying on top of its customers' new and used cart sales and repair needs while its IT infrastructure stagnated.

With its servers already seven years old and past their useful life, the company knew it was time for a change.

"The system was hanging on by a thread," says Steve Gerard, manager, and with each passing moment the risk of losing critical data on the hard drive increased. It was also cumbersome to access the system remotely – a big issue for a business with sales and repair staff constantly out in the field.

The company had learned about the severity of its biggest risk, business continuity, first hand. When Hurricane Sandy hit the region in October, 2012, Vic Gerard Golf Carts was knocked out of business for twelve long days, with no phones, no computers, and no power.

Not only did the company want to avoid a repeat of that fate, but they also had a plan to move into new offices, further threatening its fragile IT set-up. Vic Gerard Golf Carts' management knew the time had come.

Teeing Up for Cloud

The company's long-term IT provider, STF Consulting, had helped Vic Gerard Golf Carts stretch its current solution as far as it could go, while urging them to consider a switch to the cloud.

After pricing out new servers and comparing the cost to the additional services and benefits of cloud, they decided to embrace the change. STF retired the servers and ported the company's business onto STF's Cloud Services offering. Instead of investing in and maintaining in-house servers, all of the company's software is how hosted in STF's secure data center in Parsippany, New Jersey and delivered via the Internet. STF also set up a new Internet service provider for the business, using the existing connection as a back-up.

The benefits of STF's managed cloud solution quickly became clear:

- **Anywhere, any device access** to all solutions. Sales personnel can easily connect to the system to develop quotes, access customer history, display product images and more. Management can view data and reports remotely. "It gave us the ability to do more on the road," says Gerard.
- **Software runs faster** and is always up to date. By accessing hosted software, Vic Gerard Golf Carts never has to worry about upgrades and being behind on new features.
- **Protection from disaster**. If power or a connection fails, users can pick up right where they left off from another location or device – the cursor will even be in the exact place they left it on the desktop.
- **Easy relocation of the business**: Staff can simply set up their computers, log on and resume their business.
- **A predictable monthly fee,** with none of the sudden additional costs that sometimes crop up for unexpected needs.

By upgrading to the cloud, the company has also laid the groundwork for future enhancements. One idea is providing schematics, via tablet computers, to assist repair staff working remotely. Another is collecting payment during sales or repair calls, to speed the order-to-cash cycle.

Working with the right partner was key to achieving a smooth transition and a successful cloud experience for Vic Gerard Golf Carts, as it is for any business. "You want somebody to be there if there is a problem," says Gerard. "The employees at STF are great, very knowledgeable and on top of things. If they don't have an answer, they'll find one, even after hours. They have always been first rate."

After years of playing in the rough, managers are Vic Gerard Golf Carts are pleased to be back on the green with cloud. Gerard recommends other businesses consider following suit. "If it's a decent-sized business, it's a no-brainer, the only way to go," says Gerard. "I highly recommended cloud."