



Wheelchair Provider Boosts Revenues by 10 Percent with Cloud Productivity Solution

Customer: Independence on Wheels

Website:

www.independenceonwheels.com

Customer Size: 11 employees

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Life sciences—medical devices

Customer Profile

Based in Hohenwald, Tennessee, Independence on Wheels offers manual and power wheelchairs, lifts and ramps—and related consulting, installation, and support services—to customers in Tennessee, North Alabama, and Northwest Georgia.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Office 365
 - Microsoft Exchange Online
 - Microsoft Lync Online
 - Microsoft SharePoint Online
- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Office Professional 2010

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“With Office 365, we can identify delays in our sales process in hours or minutes, instead of three to four days, which speeds up sales and increases revenue.”

Albert Baxter, Co-Founder and Chief Operational Officer, Independence on Wheels

Independence on Wheels sought to improve customer service and speed up delivery of its wheelchairs by streamlining its sales process. To achieve this, the company replaced its many disparate technologies with Microsoft Office 365. Now, customers get their wheelchairs up to 20 days faster, so employees can assist new customers more quickly, and as a result, revenues are steadily increasing.

Business Needs

Independence on Wheels brings freedom of movement to people for whom walking is difficult or impossible. The company’s employees work in the field, visiting healthcare providers, insurance companies, and patients to identify and deliver the wheelchair that will offer the most independence. A key competitive challenge in this industry is speed of chair delivery. “One of the biggest concerns of the physicians and therapists who prescribe these devices is turnaround time,” explains Albert Baxter, Co-Founder and Chief Operational Officer of Independence on Wheels. “The longer a patient is confined to bed waiting for the wheelchair, the greater likelihood of complications, such as skin breakdown,

muscle atrophy, and respiratory problems.”

To speed delivery of its products, Independence on Wheels employees needed to effectively communicate and collaborate with each other and with customers throughout the sales cycle, which meant having a highly mobile workforce. But the company didn’t have the resources to support this level of interactivity. The IT environment included a single, aging, on-premises server, running Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 for document storage, and a third-party company provided simple hosted email services. There were no standard solutions for instant messaging, shared calendars, or conferencing, so group discussions and meetings were difficult to coordinate. “Just knowing where people

were or when they'd be available was a nightmare," says Baxter.

Independence on Wheels wanted to implement an updated, more functional, and better integrated IT and communications environment, while minimizing the cost of rolling out and supporting it.

Solution

In early 2011, Independence on Wheels began evaluating online solutions to promote productivity and business growth, including Google Apps for Business. But that option wasn't a good fit for the company. "I spent two weeks trying to figure out how the Google Apps approach would fit our business. I could never wrap my head around how the apps were supposed to integrate with each other," Baxter says.

Next, the company looked at [Microsoft Office 365](#), a collection of cloud-based email, calendaring, collaboration, conferencing, and productivity services. After a brief testing phase, the company adopted the service across the organization. Cost-effective, rich communication functionality was a key reason for the choice.

Specifically, Independence on Wheels uses Microsoft Exchange Online to automatically update email inboxes, and share calendars and contacts, on portable computers, in addition to multiple smartphone platforms. Baxter says, "For only [US]\$6 a month per person, we provide comprehensive, big-business tools to our staff. Exchange Online is a particularly important addition; it has fundamentally changed how we do business."

Independence on Wheels also uses Microsoft Lync Online to expand instant messaging, conferencing, and presence capabilities across the company. For file sharing and improved collaboration through team sites, the company will

migrate to Microsoft SharePoint Online when its on-premises server is retired. "I'm familiar with Microsoft solutions from my days in the corporate world, and I've been looking for a way to affordably bring rich communication to our company," Baxter says. "With Office 365, we got that and more."

Baxter, who freely admits to having little IT expertise, notes how easy it was to set up each employee's Office 365 account using a simple administrator portal. Now, the whole company subscribes to the service.

Benefits

By adopting Microsoft Office 365, Independence on Wheels gains the following benefits:

- **Quick setup, lower IT costs.** Using Office 365 helps the company avoid IT costs in several ways. First, because Office 365 is so easy for Baxter to administer himself, he doesn't require outside help to deploy or maintain it, saving \$360 a month on third-party IT support. "The learning curve has been amazingly fast," he says, adding that with the Office 365 administrator portal, he is also able to quickly set up new employees to support his growing business.

Also, with Exchange Online in particular, the company greatly upgraded its communications capabilities, without investing in additional IT labor and infrastructure. "We were previously looking at \$8,000 to set up an Exchange Server and migrate mailboxes to it, plus ongoing support fees," says Baxter. "For a company of our size, that's a huge sum." Similarly, the company expects to save nearly \$2,000 a year on maintenance costs when it retires its existing physical server and switches to SharePoint Online.
- **Robust support for a mobile workforce.** With Office 365, Independence on Wheels employees can work from almost anywhere and stay better connected. For example, by using a team calendar that everyone can access from PCs, tablets, and smartphones, all employees have greater visibility into business activity. "With the ability to schedule online meetings (and use video conferencing and desktop sharing), we can keep in closer touch about important new business developments, products, and government regulations," says Baxter. "The result is that we can manage time better and have the freedom to hire more staff as needed—all of which we directly attribute to Office 365."
- **Faster sales cycle and higher revenues.** The time-management benefits Baxter described have proven to be essential to business growth. Key steps within the sales process—including patient referral, assessment of needs, insurance approval, and so on—are achieved more quickly because employees can collaborate more effectively and coordinate schedules in real time. Baxter estimates that this shaves about 20 days off of the previous sales cycle, reducing the number of days—from receiving the lead to delivering the wheelchair—from 75 to 55.

"With Office 365, we can identify delays in our sales process in hours or minutes, instead of three to four days, which speeds up sales and increases revenue," he says. "The process just flows so smoothly now. And we're already seeing substantial growth because of it—we are on target for at least a 10 percent revenue increase annually. In our industry segment, that's huge."