

Jason's Deli cuts costs and improves collaboration by switching to Google Apps for Business



At a Glance

What they wanted to do

- Replace cumbersome open-source portal and homegrown email system without building out its in-house infrastructure.

What they did

- Selected Google Apps for Business for its no-hassle, cloud-based model for email and document sharing and range of collaborative features.

What they accomplished

- Established a scalable, inexpensive communication and collaboration hub for the national restaurant chain's thousands of employees.
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Organization

Jason's Deli is a national restaurant concept and caterer with 225 corporate and franchise stores coast to coast. Headquartered in Texas, the company specializes in soups, salads and sandwiches. Founded in 1976, Jason's Deli has been a leader in the healthy dining movement by eliminating artificial trans-fat and high-fructose corn syrup from its recipes while ensuring that its dishes are fresh and tasty. That willingness to listen to customers and try new ideas led the company to improve communication and collaboration throughout the organization with Google Apps for Business, a no-hassle cloud-based platform.

Challenge

For years, Jason's Deli relied on an open-source portal and homegrown email system to support messaging and document sharing among its 10,000 employees. However, as the successful chain added stores and built out its catering business, both the portal and the email infrastructure lagged behind its growth. "Not only were they cumbersome products for our executives and employees to use to collaborate and communicate, but they also suffered frequent crashes and slowdowns," notes CIO Kevin Verde.

In addition, Verde says, there was little support for document sharing, and the available feature set was limited. Without easy access to standard corporate documents, logos and presentations, sales teams and franchise owners were forced to duplicate their efforts. At the same time, executives lacked visibility into ongoing store and catering efforts and, therefore had difficulty reviewing and tracking their employees' progress. They also found it difficult to communicate important corporate messages simultaneously to specific groups such as franchise owners.

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—Kevin Verde, CIO

Verde and his small team tried to keep up with the development, upgrades, maintenance and corporate scaling needs of the portal and email system, but the task proved too complex and time-consuming. Jason's Deli considered moving to Microsoft SharePoint or a similar system, but wanted to avoid the added complexity and cost of another on-premise solution.

Solution

Jason's Deli deployed Google Apps for Business in early 2010 at the urging of executives who were using the tools as workarounds to the chain's unwieldy portal and email applications. The company now has more than 1,700 user

About Google Apps for Business

Google Apps for Business offers simple, powerful communication and collaboration tools for enterprises of any size – all hosted by Google to streamline setup, minimize maintenance, and reduce IT costs. With Gmail, Google Calendar, and integrated chat, users can stay connected and work together with ease, even in private domains. And, using Google Docs, which includes word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation tools, they can share files and collaborate in real-time, keeping versions organized and available wherever and whenever users work. Google Sites, Google Groups, and Google Video add further capabilities for web publishing, secure sharing, and video storage and access.

For more information visit
www.google.com/a

accounts for internal employees and 23 franchises partners, who use the system to access Gmail, Google Docs, Google Calendar, and Google Sites.

The email and collaboration system fulfills Verde's need for single sign-on access to multiple applications, strong password management, role-based content access, and support for an array of mobile devices and e-mail clients. The service is user-friendly, features a fast and responsive interface, and allows for posting broadcast messages to all users.

In the area of document management, Google Apps fulfills Verde's checklist of necessary features – including version control, higher limits for file size and total size, role-based permissions to access and edit files, and hierarchical file structuring. Google Apps also solves disaster recovery, archiving and compliance problems.

Perhaps most importantly, because of his staff size and the critical nature of email and document sharing, Google Apps places no burdens on the data center and enables easy transition from the portal and homegrown email systems. Verde says that Google Apps has met and exceeded all of the company's requirements.

Benefits

Migrating from the burdensome open-source portal and email system has taken a significant load off of IT in terms of system upkeep and end-user support. "Our help desk tickets for email/collaboration support have been reduced by close to 50 percent," Verde says.

The cloud-based service also obviates the need to scale servers, storage and bandwidth, or to build another site for disaster recovery. Instead, users can be easily added to the service; archiving, business continuity, data retention policies and compliance are built in. Another time and money-saver is Google's support for mobile devices, as IT used to have to maintain device-specific servers to support the employees' array of smartphones, tablets and laptops.

"With Google Apps, we're able to meet the needs of our users with less assistance from IT, and redirect IT staff efforts towards activities that are more directly tied to our bottom line," Verde says.

Although the IT team provided multiple channels for training – including documentation, videos, mentors and Q&A sessions – many users adapted easily to the intuitive interface with minimal support. As proof, catering sales teams now use Google Sites to post and share audience-specific presentations. They alert one another to calendar opportunities such as seasonal church and school events and then tweak their slide decks accordingly. "Collaboration using Google Sites saves a tremendous amount of time, improves the quality of the pitches, and helps close more deals. That leads to increased productivity for the sales force," Verde notes.

Franchisees benefit from Google Docs because they can easily access corporate logos, menu updates, food preparation documents and other critical information. Likewise, Jason's Deli executives can stay in close contact with franchisees via broadcast messages, delivering critical corporate information more quickly and improving employee relations.

Executives are utilizing Google spreadsheets to map out corporate goals and ensure that everyone is collaborating. Before Google Docs, all corporate information was housed in departmental silos; now every department's goals are tracked in a single, shared spreadsheet, and department heads can see the status of every major project. "The easy and transparent access to our goals ensures we stay on the same page and continue to make coordinated decisions," says Jason's Deli CEO Rob Tortorice.

