immixGroup
IT Solutions

Operations & Maintenance, Right-Sourced

Case Study

"immixGroup's understanding of our challenges helped our IT department immediately. Their steady leadership and expertise changed our impression of IT, and saved us time and money in the process."

Joe Wisnewski, FAIA
President
Wisnewski Blair & Associates

Broad Expertise, Deep Industry Knowledge Transforms Architecture Firm's IT Department

Background

Wisnewski Blair & Associates (WBA) is a mid-sized architecture and design firm. With its business growing rapidly, WBA recognized the need to plan for its future IT requirements while maintaining its infrastructure and ensuring current IT resources were used effectively. To accomplish this, WBA determined that an outside consultant with broad technical and functional expertise who understood its unique business requirements was the best path to success. WBA looked to immixGroup.

Challenges

Growing quickly, WBA was having difficulty finding IT professionals with the skills and experience necessary to meet its daily and long term technology goals. Specifically, WBA needed to:

- Implement procedures for application and OS patching, software auditing and licensing, and infrastructure monitoring, including:
    - Large volumes of AutoCAD® & Revit® documents
    - Large format printers & plotters
- Document IT processes & recommend efficiency improvements
- Offer daily user support/issue tracking
- Plan & implement strategic infrastructure changes for current and future needs, such as:
    - Maintaining and upgrading Newforma Project Center
    - Implementing scalable storage

In addition, WBA wanted its IT department to be seen internally as providing a valuable service. Meeting the daily needs of its user base while also providing leadership and planning for future technology needs was proving to be a significant challenge.

Solution

To address capability gaps within its own IT support team, WBA engaged immixGroup's onsite consulting services. Initially, immixGroup met with WBA's managers to review their IT structure and help clarify the firm's short-term and long-term goals. In addition to providing the experienced IT resources with the skills WBA required, immixGroup made available a deep pool of talented consultants who could be tapped if and when necessary.

Once onsite, immixGroup's lead consultant reviewed WBA's business and IT processes and created documentation to enable a consistent user experience. With WBA management, immixGroup reviewed and documented core IT functions, such as Backup and Recovery, and presented recommendations for improvement across a range of business areas.

Contact Us

To learn more, contact immixGroup at 703.752.0610 or via email at services@immixGroup.com.

IT System Management
To achieve WBA's maintenance and compliance efficiency goals, immixGroup implemented an enterprise-class IT system management software solution to automate operating system and application patching for both desktops and servers, audit installed software, and alert IT administrators to system changes and events. Real-time monitoring and alerts provide WBA exceptional availability. Alerts identify obvious failures and warn of threshold events to prevent possible outages. immixGroup immediately responded to alerts, continually providing WBA with optimum proactive and reactive solutions.

Help Desk Solutions
immixGroup implemented a new, simplified Help Desk system that was readily adopted by the user community. This new system generated monthly reports allowing WBA's management to clearly see the types of issues their users were experiencing - information that helped WBA make wiser decisions on training opportunities, hardware purchases, and software application effectiveness.

Infrastructure Improvements
As day-to-day operational efficiency improved, immixGroup's consultants focused on infrastructure planning and growth. Adding employees and data at a rapid pace, WBA required infrastructure changes to ensure smooth growth and continued system availability. immixGroup managed and delivered on multiple efforts, including a storage array implementation, server consolidation through virtualization, desktop hardware refreshes, and network improvements.

As one example, WBA embarked on a desktop hardware refresh for 25% of its architectural staff. The project necessitated an aggressive schedule for rolling out new hardware, reimaging hardware to be redeployed, and properly sanitizing and disposing of end-of-life hardware. immixGroup researched available hardware configurations, secured a competitive quote, and leveraged its pool of experienced IT professionals to successfully complete the project, on time and on budget.

In addition, immixGroup analyzed WBA's implementation of Newforma Project Center, upgrading the primary server to improve indexing and reliability. When Newforma released a new platform, immixGroup deployed the new server, client, and Infoexchange components with no user downtime.

Business Improvements
To achieve a competitive edge, WBA hired a visualization artist to produce photo realistic renderings of their designs. Rendering uses complex software to produce life-like representations of architectural designs, consuming huge amounts of processing capacity.

immixGroup analyzed the software and hardware requirements and implemented a rendering farm – a collection of high powered servers. This allowed artists to distribute rendering tasks, reducing processing time from days to hours. In addition to the full-time farm, immixGroup implemented a second distributed environment ("BackBurner") that harnesses CPU power of idle desktops, improving efficiency and lowering costs.

Results

With immixGroup's consistent, high quality support, the **internal reputation of the WBA IT department improved immediately,** transforming from a perceived roadblock into an essential partner performing most daily business operations behind the scenes.

For staff, working weekends to meet project deadlines went from a regular to a rare occurrence, with IT systems operating and available 24x7. The number of Help Desk tickets for **unplanned desktop and server problems dropped 41%** as immixGroup automated the monitoring process.

Real-time monitoring of the servers allowed for intervention before a service became unavailable, **greatly improving uptime.** This increase in availability enabled WBA to maximize its greatest resources, its designers and architects.

In addition, WBA improved its software licensing management through immixGroup's automated auditing solution. Not only can WBA now determine whether its licensing is in compliance, it can also see which users possess licenses but are not using them. Moving licenses between users, rather than buying new ones, **saves WBA money on software costs.**

immixGroup's comprehensive IT services helped WBA achieve its business goals, delivering numerous successful infrastructure projects in support of its growth while developing and improving the internal reputation of its IT department.

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