

# Computer Fellows Inc.

## SLOW AND STEADY WINS THE RACE

**When** we made the move to managed services back in 2005, we saw it as a way to add more predictability to our staffing. As a break-fix provider, business was up one month and down the next, and we always seemed to have either too few people or too many. Becoming an MSP would help us anticipate future needs better and set our payroll accordingly.

Better yet, switching to managed services would help our clients too by enabling them to budget for IT services more accurately. Unfortunately, however, our customers didn't see it that way at first. They liked working with us as they had before, and didn't understand the logic of paying us even in months when nothing went wrong.

So we made a strategic decision to go slow initially. Rather than push our customers to sign subscription-based management contracts with us right away, we started out by just installing a few remote management tools on their servers and doing some of our work off-site. After a while, they started to see how that enabled us to fix problems more quickly and even prevent them from happening at all. Later, when we offered our customers a full-blown managed service contract, it wasn't such an unfamiliar concept any longer, and most of them readily signed up.

Meanwhile, easing our customers into managed services wound up being a big plus for us too. It gave us a chance to refine our work processes and get a precise handle on what delivering proactive IT services really costs. As a result, when we eventually got our clients onto managed service agreements, we could set prices and define SLAs with more confidence.

Of course, given the technology industry's notoriously fast pace, "take your time" might sound like strange advice. But it's sure paid off for us. Our revenue is growing 20 to 30 percent a year, and our customer satisfaction lev-

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els remain high even though we've significantly expanded our client base. Meanwhile, we're providing better service than ever, because working remotely allows our technicians to spend time less time traveling and more time supporting clients instead.

### **Getting the Right Tools**

Here's some more advice that can take time to implement: Do your best to develop vertical expertise. For example, a lot of our customers are in the construction sector, and getting to know their industry has equipped us to serve them better. Mastering the intricacies of a vertical re-

quires plenty of patience, but for us at least it's been well worth the effort.

There is one thing, however, that a newcomer to managed services shouldn't be slow about, and that's deploying first-rate tools. We waited two long years before implementing a professional services automation system, and I've been kicking myself over it ever since. Succeeding as a managed services provider hinges on having the right software for the job.

As far as remote management and monitoring software goes, we've used Zenith Infotech's solution from day one. We looked at other systems, but the up-front

# PARTNER PROFILE



## PROFILE SCOTT YUSAVAGE PRESIDENT COMPUTER FELLOWS INC.

Web Site: [computerfellows.com](http://computerfellows.com)

Headquarters: Pittsburgh, Pa.

Services Offered: Managed services, IT consulting, staff augmentation, and more

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licensing costs were just too high for us. Zenith’s pay-as-you-go pricing made getting into managed services much more affordable. We’ve also come to appreciate how their outstanding NOC takes care of routine maintenance chores for us, leaving my employees more time for bigger, more strategic tasks. That’s a big part of why we’ve been able to add so many new customers in recent years without growing our staff.

### Peace of Mind

Zenith’s Backup and Disaster Recovery solution has also been a big contributor to our success. In fact, we try to

bundle it into every managed service agreement we sign. Under the terms of our standard SLA, we’re fully responsible if a customer’s servers go down. Having the BDR solution in place gives us peace of mind that if there’s ever a problem we can restore the client’s data quickly and completely. In addition, the BDR solution has turned out to be a great way to get our foot in the door with new customers. We start out by protecting their data and usually end up managing their network as well.

Looking ahead, we plan to begin using Zenith’s SmartStyle Computing solution as well. The SmartStyle platform is an integrated, fully-functional IT environment com-

plete with virtual servers, desktops, and storage. In addition to helping us get into cloud computing, we expect it to drive down our clients’ infrastructure costs. That should free up money they can then invest in revenue-driving business applications instead. Our customers will like that, and it should ultimately result in more project work for us.

### Next Steps

To learn more about partnering with Zenith Infotech, visit [www.zenithinfotech.com](http://www.zenithinfotech.com) and click “Partner Programs.”