

CASE STUDY ADVERTORIAL

Managed Services Success Stories

MANAGED SERVICES MODEL MAINTAINS CLIENT INTIMACY, PERSONALIZATION

WHEN IT COMES TO CUSTOMER SERVICE, ZENITH HELPS WIPFLI PUT CLIENTS FIRST

Clarence J. Wipfli established Wipfli & Company as a one-man accounting operation in 1930. Today, the VAR/business consultancy provides technology, accounting and business support and services to more than 20,000 clients across multiple industries. Clarence's original mission is still alive and well: to bring five core values — excellence, teamwork, perseverance, integrity and caring—a clear vision to clients.

This vision has since empowered Wipfli LLP to grow, organically as well as through acquisitions, to be one of the largest CPA and consulting firms in the United States. With more than 750 associates in offices across Wisconsin, and Minnesota as well as in India, Wipfli is also an integral part of Moore Stephens International Limited, one of the largest global networks of accounting firms in the world.

Wipfli's main focus is to help individuals and businesses of all sizes, from small, family-owned companies to large, international businesses, streamline processes, improve performance, leverage the right technology, and stimulate financial growth; but its sweet spot is with SMBs. The consultancy's wide range of services includes accounting, consulting, audits, risk management, business valuation and financial advisory. Within the consulting group, Wipfli offers a full range of technology services including custom development, ERP implementations, and now, managed services.

SCORECARD

Solution Provider:

Wipfli LLP

Vendor:

Zenith Infotech
(www.zenithinfotech.com)

Solution:

An all-encompassing managed services model that allows businesses of all sizes to streamline processes, improve performance and leverage the right technology.

Technology as an Enabler

The firm's technology practice is very much tied into its overall goals of maintaining client intimacy and personalized service. IT isn't seen as a goal in itself, but as an enabler of clients' larger business objectives.

"Our goal is to be a premier provider of back-office services," says Michael Pynch, Partner, IT & Business Process Services, Wipfli LLP.

A common goal at this technology company has always rested on being as proactive as possible in helping clients maintain network uptime and keep their data protected, through



MICHAEL PYNCH
PARTNER, IT &
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SERVICES, WIPFLI LLP

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MARK SCHULTZ
IT CONSULTANT
WIPFLI LLP

“ZENITH’S BUSINESS MODEL WAS VERY ATTRACTIVE. WE SEND THE DATA TO THEM, THEY HAVE A GROUP TO FERRET OUT ISSUES AND ALERT US. IT FIT VERY WELL WITH OUR BUSINESS MODEL AND FORM OF LEADERSHIP IN TERMS OF WHAT WE WANT TO DO INSIDE AND OUTSIDE.”

services including regular site visits and a client help desk. As remote managed services technology grew more reliable and trustworthy, the firm saw an opportunity to better fulfill its proactive promise, and began to investigate potential managed services partners for business continuity and remote network support.

With its considerable resources, including two outsourcing offices in India, Wipfli would have been well-positioned to create its own data center to support a managed services practice. Despite these resources, however, Wipfli decided that the better business choice would be to adhere to its core services and strengths, and instead seek a partner for this line of business. “We don’t want to be a data center,” Schultz says. “We offer professional services; we sell our time.”

Schultz, along with Wipfli partner Michael Pynch and manager Jeff Stevens, closely evaluated potential managed services providers, and ultimately chose Zenith Infotech. “Zenith’s business model was very attractive,” Schultz says. “We send the data to them, they have a group to ferret out issues and alert us. It fit very well with our business model and form of leadership in terms of what we want to do inside and outside.”

Partnering with a managed services provider for Wipfli’s Information Technology Outsourcing (ITO) service line frees up its technology talent for higher value activities. Now the technology practice can truly be proactive, and help clients preserve uptime by heading off potential issues before they happen.

Restoring Confidence

At one time, a Wipfli client’s IT department was under scrutiny because of past issues, such as multiple downtime incidents for its email, database, and file service systems. When their RAID 10 (Redundant Array of Independent Disks) set was corrupted, they soon realized their tape backup system didn’t hold all the data they had expected. To recover the data they had to ship the entire

RAID cage to a data recovery center at very high cost and more than seven days of downtime.

Wipfli consultants worked with the client to develop a set of requirements to prevent such issues from recurring, including a four-hour-or-less downtime window and 24/7 monitoring and maintenance for their critical systems, as well as no future data loss of any kind for critical systems. Wipfli chose to install Zenith’s Server Monitoring Agents and Advanced Recovery and Continuity Appliance (ARCA). “With a very simple installation and quick rollout we implemented the Zenith solution,” says Stevens. “As a result, the client now has simplified their Disaster Recovery plan and has complete confidence in the solution. Monitoring has since saved the client additional downtime by identifying disk controller errors on their SQL system,” says Schultz. “We were able to resolve the controller errors during a scheduled update window and the client did not have any unplanned downtime. In addition, the monitoring has saved the client from an email-down situation where the Exchange server’s maximum database size was going to be reached. The client is very happy with the solution and we are able to sleep better at night knowing the system is under constant attention.”

While not every client has chosen server monitoring, the technology services staff is considering putting at least one server on the program at every client to standardize and simplify remote access to their networks. A managed services model enables Wipfli to minimize the risk of client data loss and downtime while helping technical staff avoid the challenges of sudden recovery projects. “We have more than 750 associates doing tax returns, audits, benefits planning, financial services; if the system blows up, it blows up a lot more than technical services. It’s Wipfli’s reputation,” Schultz notes. “That makes reliable data and networks mission critical for us as well as our clients.” ■