



CASE STUDY

Partslink and RightFax

BACKGROUND

Partslink of Edmonton, Alberta provides a market for heavy-duty truck parts for more than 200 fax-based clients whose locations range from Fairbanks to Miami. In the past, the company's owner Scott Tetz worked at a truck-parts salvage facility that maintained a large inventory. He noticed that if the facility did not carry a requested part in stock, the customer was turned away. At that time fax-based locating systems already existed, but four years ago Tetz decided to improve on the idea and totally change the way a salvage company could do business. He opened Partslink with a whole new approach.

Now, the company does business through fax broadcasting and the intranet (where it operates as PartSeek and IMS Marketing Services Inc.). Partslink disseminates a daily electronic "newsletter" of 10-15 pages that it distributes to nearly 200 subscribers in North America. The broadcast lists parts needed and/or available at various sites. Partslink subscribers then contact each other directly when they find what they need or are able to fulfill a request.

THE CHALLENGE

At one time, the company was using another fax server, which did not provide full confirmation of fax activity and proved unreliable in other ways. Because faxing is fundamental to its business, the loss of faxes was becoming disastrous. Tetz reports that he knew in general how many outgoing faxes were failing but that other, severe difficulties ate up the server's time, making it impossible to use the server for anything else — when it was available at all. "Our growth was exploding, but the fax server just couldn't keep up."

"It was a technical nightmare," he explains. "The company whose product we were using wasn't diligent about upgrades and fixes, and there were always delays in the upgrades we did get. When we did get a software fix, two or more other things would go wrong! The hardware provider blamed the software company, and vice-versa. Our problems grew by the month." Tetz searched the Internet for other, more reliable fax server companies and came up with several options, including Captaris, Inc. He placed calls to every company whose product looked promising.

THE SOLUTION

The company began with three Gammalink boards and three channels in September 1996 and doubled its capacity in June 1997 with the purchase of more boards and a six-channel system to send its broadcasts. The company's one server operates for three-to-five hours nightly; faxing about 3,000 broadcast pages to its 200 fax-based clients all over North America.

Tetz' use of RightFax grew more sophisticated as RightFax features became more robust. Now Partslink uses a relational database that controls and runs all of its business and has built RightFax into it. Tetz customized his installation so that he literally pushes a button at the end of the day, and the broadcast begins. When he comes to the office in the morning, he handles "unresolved" faxes — clients who have run out of paper or forgotten to turn on their fax machines.

"People in our industry are slow to take up technological change, so we decided not to focus on email but to concentrate on faxing to distribute the list of available parts," says Tetz. (However, Partslink also creates and hosts Web sites and distributes parts information on the Web for its other clients. It also uses RightFax software to notify non-Internet customers when they have email. "A really handy feature," Tetz comments.)

THE RESULTS

At Partslink we aim to provide reliability and care to our customers, and that's exactly what we get from Captaris and the people who work there. We rely on the technical strength of our RightFax server so our customers receive proper and up-to-date information from us every day. Truly, the majority of our business depends on our RightFax installation."

"What I like about Captaris," says Tetz, "is that they (the developers) concentrate on the back end, not the front. We found RightFax software easy to integrate into our existing database program," he adds. "For us, RightFax delivers just what we want and need."

Tetz says he considers Captaris Inc. his partner because so much of his business relies on his RightFax installation. He even scheduled a trip to visit Captaris so he could meet the people he had been speaking with over the telephone.

Not only did Tetz double the capacity of his RightFax installation, he has doubled his business in a short time. Currently, he's in the process of finding larger office quarters for Partslink.

"People at Captaris bend over backwards for their customers," Tetz says. "In an age when many companies merely give lip service to the needs of the customer, Captaris really delivers customer service."

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