



INGRAM MICRO CLOUD SERVICES CASE STUDY

Conversant Group, LLC

Founded:
2009

url:
www.conversantgroup.com

Employees:
8

Key Market Vertical:
Construction, Manufacturing, Insurance

Specializations:
backup and recovery, network security,
network and storage virtualization

Business Challenge:
A construction customer was having regular issues with field workers' laptops picking up viruses, which was becoming a time drain to address and was leading to productivity losses with month old data.

Solution: Awareness Technologies' InterGuard
By installing Awareness Technologies' InterGuard security-as-a-solution service, which runs in the background of field workers' machines, Conversant Group helps its customer track and address employee web usage and mitigate laptop viruses and downtime.

Customer Benefits:
By being able to view reports showing web usage statistics, the business owner is able to confront project managers who violate the company's Internet usage policies by spending excessive time on non-work-related websites during business hours.

Create a Network Security Niche

This IT consultant is projecting 40% revenue growth this year by combining its virtualization expertise with a unique security-as-a-service offering.

Even though Conversant Group has been in business only four years, the IT consultant is different than a typical five-year-old IT consulting company in a few ways. For one thing, Conversant Group has doubled its revenue every year since its inception, and the \$2 million company is projecting 40% growth this year over 2012. Led by Founder and Chief Listening Officer John Anthony Smith, who has more than 15 years' experience in information technology and more than 8 years' experience running IT related businesses, this company has distinguished itself as a Citrix and VMware specialist.

Although Conversant Group started out as a traditional IT consultant, it quickly realized that becoming a managed services provider was a win for its clients, who want predictability in their costs, and for the IT consultant, who benefits from predictable income.

One area where Conversant Group has been particularly successful is combining its virtualization expertise with its network security expertise. A recent customer win with a construction company illustrates this strategy. "The construction client has about 40 employees, and when we first engaged with them they were running 15 physical servers to support their field workers," says Smith. "By migrating them to a virtual environment, we were able to reduce their number of physical servers down to three."

Even though this move would save the customer a bundle of money, Conversant Group was aware of one need the customer still needed to address with its superintendents (i.e. construction managers), who were getting viruses on their company-issued laptops at least once per month. The construction company's owner suspected rogue websites, including pornographic websites, were to blame for the incidents, but he didn't have the hard evidence he needed.

"The owner had tried implementing employee tracking software on his own, but it offered limited functionality such as only tracking the number of click throughs on a website, plus it often misreported website activity," says Smith.

Wanted: A White-Labeled Inside Security-as-a-Service Solution

Conversant Group began researching solutions to solve its customer's problem and through its value-added distributor partner, Ingram Micro, it found the answer in Awareness Technologies' InterGuard solution. "InterGuard is an agent-based internal threat prevention solution that includes four modules: Web Filtering, Laptop Recovery, Employee Monitoring, and Data Loss Prevention," says Smith. "The solution is sold by module and by seat and is delivered in a SaaS format, which requires no hardware investment from the end user and can be easily bundled with other managed services offerings."

The IT consultant moved forward with the solution, knowing that deploying it in a Citrix environment might introduce additional complexities. "We initially ran into three problems during our testing, including Internet Explorer crashes, a conflict with Citrix, and incompatibility with Kaspersky AV software," says

Smith. "Awareness' tech support was great to work with, and they helped us quickly resolve each issue through a software update."

Conversant Group installed the InterGuard Employee Monitoring module on 15 of its customers' field laptops. The software is installed in a hidden, obscure folder, and it operates in the background, without being detected in the "add/remove software" folder to prevent employees from trying to remove it. "We also turn off employees' admin rights to further prevent them from trying to remove or disable the software," says Smith.

Unlike the customer's previous internal security software, the InterGuard software provides the business owner with detailed information about employees' web viewing activities. "Even if an employee has five browser windows open, the software can detect which tab is active, and it can be programmed to prevent certain websites from opening and/or to take snap shots if employees perform searches suggesting violent or sexually deviant behavior," says Smith.

*"Awareness Technologies fills a gap we've had in our network security offering."
— John Anthony Smith, Chief Listening Officer, Conversant Group*

After just four months of use, Conversant Group's construction client is so happy with the InterGuard solution that it's already in talks with Conversant about activating additional modules such as Laptop Recovery and MobileMonitor. "The Laptop Recovery module uses geo location technology to locate and remotely wipe lost or stolen laptops," says Smith. "This is the only product we're aware of on the market that provides this functionality for laptops."

WHERE RAINMAKERS THRIVE





According to Smith, “Awareness Technologies fills a gap we’ve had in our network security offering and gives us complete control over our customers’ PCs, laptops, and even their iOS devices. What’s also nice is that we can rebrand this solution with our logo and messaging, so that customers identify this technology as part of our IT expertise.”

Conversant Group is already taking its new bundled offering to other clients, including a recent win with an insurance company. “They signed up for the Laptop Recovery service, and we’re in talks with them about adding Data Loss Prevention, too,” says Smith.

With Awareness’ off-site backup capabilities, Conversant Group is looking at the possibility of offering complete BDR (backup and disaster recovery) services, including on-site and cloud backup using fewer vendors than it worked with in the past. By simplifying its own vendor management processes, Conversant Group is able to expand its IT services without compromising its profit margins — and to continue its trend of healthy double-digit revenue growth.