

itSynergy

SITUATION

From its founding in 1997, itSynergy, a Phoenix-based Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, has been offering Microsoft Windows Small Business Server to clients from the solution's earliest 4.0 version right through all the upgrades to the current version of Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2003 SP1 (SBS 2003). President Michael Cocanower especially enjoys working with small businesses because of the lack of bureaucracy within these organizations. "There's no red tape, and generally you're dealing with the business owner who will make a purchase or not," Cocanower explains. "You don't have to deal with a buying committee, legal review or a budgeting cycle." He also likes working with owners who will directly discover the benefits of implementing a server.

Before establishing itSynergy, Cocanower was employed by another IT company but became frustrated in the way technology providers were dealing with small businesses. "There are a lot of good technologists but not many who have a fundamental understanding of businesses. A lot of technologists make the business adapt to the technology. I decided my company would look at technology issues from the business standpoint first." Cocanower's business model has worked. Today, itSynergy has 250 clients, about 100 of them with SBS 2003, and the company has grown to 11 employees.

Creating itSynergy enabled Cocanower to provide small businesses with solutions that offer them new ways to compete. He is also an enthusiastic proponent of SBS 2003. "Microsoft took the core suite of products we would recommend to a small business and put them all into one integrated package. And today, it's got a terrific price point."

SBS 2003 has provided a solution not only for Cocanower's clients, but also for itSynergy itself. "We run SBS 2003 internally and have for some time," he explains. "All of our employees have Windows mobile devices for e-mail, and need remote access. Without all the tools SBS 2003 provides, there's no way we could function at our current level. We even use Microsoft SharePoint to document each client's issues in a central location so they're accessible to our field staff at the client site."

Cocanower recalls that when he first saw a demonstration of SBS's Remote Web Workplace (RWW), long before SBS 2003 was released commercially, "I just about fell out of my chair. I said to myself, 'I can't believe how much money Microsoft just made me.' RWW alone with nothing else would sell SBS."

RWW enables employees to log on to their office desktop from anywhere in the world through the Web; but equally important, according to Cocanower, "it gives them the ability to use their specialized line-of-business applications remotely."

RESULT

With all of SBS 2003's features, Cocanower's business is on a fast track. "We're absolutely exploding," he declares. "I can't hire people fast enough." He attributes what he calls "phenomenally explosive growth" to marketing efforts centered on search-engine optimization and key-word bidding for sponsored links, public relations efforts, and outbound marketing, as well as his association with the Microsoft Channel Advisory Council, the International Association of Microsoft Certified Partners, and user groups.

Cocanower's business has grown to the point where it also works with medium-size customers, with up to 250 PCs, but he has separated his business into two divisions so that one can work specifically on the needs of medium-sized companies and the other can devote its time exclusively to small businesses.

Among its small-business clientele, 60 to 70 percent of itSynergy's revenue derives from infrastructure work; and of that segment, 70 percent is strictly SBS 2003 implementation. "SBS 2003 has made a tremendous difference in the technology capabilities we can offer a small business," Cocanower says.

A large proportion of his 100 SBS 2003 clients are active with ongoing support from itSynergy, and they're realizing true dollar savings from features like the spam filter, which saves an organization many hours a day of sorting through and deleting useless e-mail, and RWW, which allows professionals to go home at 6:00 p.m., eat dinner with their families, tuck the children in bed, and then resume working from home, if they wish.

Cocanower expects the next SBS upgrade to enable him to continue his current growth rate. Looking even further down the road, he says, "I'm hopeful there will be another killer app, as RWW was."

Cocanower advises Microsoft partners, instead of using terms like Exchange or SharePoint or Windows Server, to focus on the business value of SBS 2003 aspects like spam filtering and RWW. "Talk about remote access to e-mail or your own customized Intranet site. Discuss SBS 2003 in terms that resonate with the business owner."

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