RSM

Recycling company modernizes their IT infrastructure by moving to a cloud–based model

It has probably been awhile since you received a fax. Until recently, that was not the case for Justin Tolar.

"Only a few years ago, we were still faxing and printing out every document," says Tolar. "We didn't really have an IT department, and we were definitely behind the times."

Tolar serves as the information technology manager at Austin Wood Recycling (AWR), a company that specializes in land clearing and development. With over 200 employees, AWR operates offices in Austin and the Dallas–Fort Worth area, with plans to expand to Houston and San Antonio. The company produces the line of Texas Native premium landscape products. In addition to their own product line, AWR processes and packages mulch and soil for other companies. As the nation's largest grinding contractor, AWR is committed to responsible forestry, converting cleared vegetation, stumps and trees into mulch for sustainable projects.

Tolar says despite AWR's success, the company's IT infrastructure was inadequate. In addition to relying on paperwork, AWR was operating on outdated hardware, which not only limited their ability to scale but also posed significant risks to reliability and cybersecurity. The company wanted to modernize their IT infrastructure by moving to a cloud–based model that would improve operational efficiency, enhance data accessibility and reduce the overhead associated with maintaining on–premises hardware.

To accomplish this objective, the company called in RSM US LLP.

A series of projects

Although the ultimate goal was to move AWR to the cloud, RSM recognized that the company's infrastructure had to be built up first. Tolar says RSM mapped out the improvements that needed to take place before the cloud migration even began.

"It took five or six infrastructure projects to even get us to the point where we could make that move," says Tolar. "But RSM always had a clear idea of what needed to happen, and they were right there in the trenches with us."

The migration would allow the company to fully embrace a cloud management model, leveraging the Microsoft ecosystem for enhanced operations. RSM facilitated the migration of shared content from the company's on–premises network to Microsoft SharePoint. This required a comprehensive review of all content across departments. RSM then migrated active content to departmental and company–wide SharePoint sites with tailored permissions, ensuring that employees could easily access the information they needed from anywhere.

"Our people are often in rural areas with limited connectivity," says Tolar. "Before the engagement, when

they got a call that someone needed a document, proposal or a quote, they had to get back into their truck, drive to someplace where they could hot spot their phone to their computer, and try to send it. But the way we're set up now, our people can pull out their phones, pull up the SharePoint app and just send documents straight from jobsites. It's a huge improvement in productivity."

Reaching the goal

By transitioning to a cloud-based infrastructure, AWR is now better positioned to scale their operations as they expand into new markets. The elimination of on-premises hardware has also reduced the risk of system failures and downtime, providing a more secure IT environment.

"Before, we had your basic cybersecurity," says Tolar. "Now, we're operating on a zero-trust model, we have multifactor authentication on all users, and our data can be accessed virtually anywhere. We are more secure and more mobile than ever before."

In addition, AWR has improved the reliability of their system. Tolar says RSM's solutions allowed the company to customize functions and establish uniform processes.

"Everything was scattered before RSM stepped in," Tolar says. "We had some services from this company, some from others. We pulled from different areas. The equipment wasn't always compatible. Today, everything is unified."

Tolar adds that the new platform has eliminated many issues that previously limited AWR's effectiveness, allowing the company to be more proactive.

"There was a lot of running around and a slew of system issues before RSM started work," Tolar says. "We were getting error messages constantly and spent a large portion of the day being reactive. Our time went to helping people get back online or fixing end-user issues. But now we focus on managing projects and improving productivity. Before RSM, it was always

things that we needed to do and problems to solve. It's a little weird, in a good way, to be at the point where we're working on improvements and tackling projects that we've always wanted to do."

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> IT Manager, Austin Wood Recycling
> **"**

The takeaway

The successful migration to a cloud-based infrastructure has helped AWR modernize their IT operations, resulting in significant time savings, improved accessibility and enhanced collaboration. Tolar says the company now has a robust, secure and scalable IT foundation that will support their operational needs and possible expansion.

"RSM did a great job tying everything together," Tolar says. "They never said, 'Well, it's close enough.' If we asked them to fit a square peg into a round hole, they always found a solution. There wasn't anything that stopped them. There have been so many niche scenarios of unique issues, and RSM has never been stumped. We've come a long way, and I value this relationship very much."