

Case Study: Streetsense Opts In For Outsourced IT

How the power of strategic technology support provided a competitive advantage to this growing architecture and design firm.

INTRODUCTION

Streetsense is a Bethesda-based retail brokerage and design company that was founded in 2001. Home to 160+ diverse creative thinkers and doers around the globe, Streetsense is unified by an approach that is people-centered and design-led.

"We're all about connecting our clients to their consumers and creating concepts and campaigns that move people — and the needle. We are left- and right-brained, book and street smart. We measure our success in stories of impact and smiles on faces."

CHOOSING TO OUTSOURCE IT SERVICES TO AN MSP

From the beginning, Streetsense Chief Administrative Office (CAO) Ira Starr knew that it would difficult to support the growth of multiple different business units, each of whom had vastly different technology needs, with an in-house IT team.

Based on decades of experience working with large in-house IT departments, Ira was aware of how common it was for these teams to become under-resourced and over-whelmed. Simply keeping internal systems and operations up and running was enough of a challenge, let alone doing any strategic planning.

"Every single company today is completely reliant on technology for growth and success," says Ira. "Companies who are technology enabled have a distinct competitive advantage. Without the ability to do proactive planning and timely implementation, you'll hit a wall. And it's a painful wall where sales slow, delivery slows, and you watch your competition outpace you."

Staying on top of new technology is key to elevating how people work, but without an outside technology partner driving and implementing the strategy, it often just doesn't get done.

LAYING THE TECHNICAL FOUNDATION FOR GROWTH

Right from the start, the decision was made to fulfill 100% of Streetsense's IT needs with a Managed Service Provider (MSP.)

Ntiva was brought in to manage all core services, from 24x7 help desk and remote system monitoring and management, to cloud services, backup and recovery, business application support, equipment replacement, new user onboarding, conference room set up, physical moves, procurement – anything and everything technology related. A full-time on-site technical resource was also added as the company continued to grow.

However, it wasn't until a new partnership was formed with CBRE, a global company, that both Streetsense and Ntiva realized that an important strategic component was missing if they wanted to expand globally. It was at this point that the decision was made to utilize Ntiva's virtual CIO (vCIO) services.

USING STRATEGIC CONSULTING TO DRIVE GLOBAL SUCCESS

The primary role of the Ntiva vCIO was to understand Streetsense's strategic business objectives and build and manage an IT strategy and budget that met those goals.

The vCIO worked closely with Ira and his extended team, not only through weekly communication, but also participating in executive operations meeting just like any other manager. Being embedded in the company allowed us to get a pulse of what's going in the company, beyond purely technical issues.

As an example, instead of hearing things such as "Oh, the Internet is slow in NYC," and only fixing the technical issue, he would dig deeper to learn underlying business issues that were being affected. Helping to fix business challenges such as "We're having challenges finding the right talent" with technology solutions is a much different value add.

The CIO was also responsible for driving a monthly IT steering committee, meeting with representatives from each Streetsense department to discuss priorities, solicit feedback and ideas, and in general ensure adoption and engagement across all departments for any new initiatives.

PRAGMATIC EXAMPLES OF USING TECHNOLOGY TO GROW

As Streetsense expanded into additional locations, including internationally, the ability to provide the same level of service to all employees was key. This required easy yet secure access to data and applications from anywhere, so the teams could work and collaborate quickly.

While at first this sounds simple, in the Streetsense world of incredibly heavy graphic processing combined with gigantic data storage needs, it's not. Massive files and programs that need to be accessed for live changes require super-fast speeds, and this can be incredibly expensive.

Ntiva got ahead of the curve right from the beginning by designing a centralized, cloud-based data storage solution that offered tiered access to different types of data. This custom designed solution provided fast access to active projects as required but tiered the access to archived data at a lower speed to save on costs.

In order to further promote team collaboration, other projects that were implemented included a new internal collaboration platform called Slack, conference room standardization, and the ability to use and scale a software program called Revit™ across all locations.

All of these efforts are just a few examples of how technology was used to help improve business work flows, ensuring Streetsense employees could work as efficiently as possible.

SUMMARY

Ntiva's strategic partnership with Streetsense has enabled the company to fully concentrate on their core business, "Creating brands people love and places people love to be."

It was important to make sure that the basic IT environment was solid and secure, that all applications and services were up and running, and that the company could rely on their technology to advance their agenda.

However, it was the decision to engage the expertise of a vCIO that was the critical next step to ensure that Streetsense continued to achieve success in a much bigger playing field, using the power of technology to grow their people and their business.