

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Virtual Office Network Helps CPAs Boost Face Time with Clients

With growing demand for its CPA services, Couto, DeFranco & Magone (West Orange, N.J.) understood that one way to maximize productivity was to keep the workforce out of the office and in the field.

Businesses in the NY metro area and internationally had come to expect a high level of care from CD&M for consulting, tax, auditing and accounting services. But returning to the office to complete various client work was consuming time and effort when staff and partners could be spending more face time with the client and delivering valuable advice. For the remote access system envisioned by CD&M principal Nick Magone, security was a prime concern. The CPA firm turned to BDE Computer Services (Clifton, N.J.) for help, a 10-year veteran of the computer wars.

BDE equipped the 15-member workforce with Intel notebooks and set up a virtual office and Terminal Services on the accounting firm's network to handle traffic from the field. Now the CPAs can securely log in from the client site, upload data directly to CD&M's server, and run e-mail and all accounting applications remotely.

"They don't have to bring all that paper back to the office. So that's much more efficient, and it improves security since there's no sensitive information sitting on their hard drives or in their briefcases," explains Bill Rooney, president of BDE Computer Services. The notebooks include utilities to establish a secure virtual private network (VPN) connection to the CD&M network firewall, but otherwise are equipped with minimal software to keep costs down. The VPN allows the CPAs to work from cybercafés, from home, and wherever they can access the Internet.

"Our workforce spends more time with clients which builds relationships and allows us to focus our efforts on them without worrying about what's going on in the office," says Magone. It also gives the workforce greater time flexibility in dealing with other client demands while they're out of the office. Magone says he typically responds to e-mails from European clients first thing in the morning right from home, providing feedback before the end of their day.

Magone was convinced from the start that a secure remote access network would be a boon to customer service and productivity. He says, "Clients have commented on how accessible our people are -- and our profitability has increased."

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