



Case Study: Vern Fonk Insurance

Vern Fonk Insurance

Positions for Growth with WorkPlace



Company Facts

Headquarters:

3531 Rucker Ave
Everett, WA. 98201

Locations: 22

Challenge

Vern Fonk needed an IT solution that would scale with its planned rapid growth via acquisition and also meet strict security and regulatory requirements.

Solution

VirSage WorkPlace

Benefits

- System scaled easily as the company added new locations.
- Built-in security met insurance industry's requirements.
- Lowered costs due to reduced downtime and hardware investment.

In 2012, Vern Fonk Insurance had 16 locations across Washington and Oregon. Its IT system did not work consistently nor did it reliably link its locations to one database. The company's home-grown system had three servers that frequently crashed, according to COO Craig Rexroat.

"They just weren't equipped to handle as much data as we had going in and the number of users as we scaled up," he said.

Vern Fonk had plans to grow via acquisition, which can introduce significant challenges in integrating data and systems from the new locations. The company needed a technology solution that would scale with its growth. It selected VirSage WorkPlace.

WorkPlace is a Desktops-as-a-Service cloud-based solution that enables users to access applications, email and files from any device anywhere without worries of equipment failure, viruses, spam or data

theft. Files and applications are hosted in a data center and accessed via the Web. The service includes no ongoing hardware investment, a big selling point for Vern Fonk.

A division of Confie Seguros, Vern Fonk has now grown to 22 locations, mostly through acquisition. Most of the West Coast company's acquisitions are smaller insurance agencies with between three and eight employees.

Acquisitions are a challenge for any company. While most acquisitions have a hard deadline, closing dates frequently change, requiring flexibility, agility and speed for an IT transition to be successful, according to Virsage Chief Product Officer Jason Konzak.

Before WorkPlace, Vern Fonk did not have the capacity to smoothly transition new locations into the organization. "Additional data would bog it down, it was slow, and the integration would screw other offices up," Rexroat said. "It broke down all the time, we kept buying memory, and we kept buying more hardware." In fact, by the time Vern Fonk brought on more capacity, it was already behind, Rexroat said. "It would stop business. And you can't afford to do that."

"What we've done with WorkPlace is create a system that right out of the box is scalable. It creates a process that is repeatable, so that each acquisition is just like the last."

WorkPlace, however, has allowed Vern Fonk to easily add data storage capacity, resources or even new applications if necessary because the cloud-based environment is scalable. In the past, Vern Fonk had to purchase new equipment and storage, and that would require significant lead time to meet the acquisition timeline. But with WorkPlace, the company can increase storage overnight. And new customer data is simply uploaded to the data center.

WorkPlace facilitates what Konzak called a "software-defined workplace." In other words, the right people have access to the right data and the right systems at the right time. "What we've done with WorkPlace is create a system that right out of the box is scalable," Konzak said. "It creates a process that is repeatable, so that each acquisition is just like the last."

Because users log-in via the Web to access their desktops and programs, it has also been simple for Vern Fonk to roll-out existing corporate applications all at once to the newly acquired company. Training the new users is straightforward. "Generally what we do is teach them how to log-in," said Rexroat. "Their desktop is there."

The transition was just as smooth when Vern Fonk first moved to Virsage Workplace. "As far as the end-user was aware, one day all users were on one system and the following day they were on the new system," said Matt Slade, an IT consultant who worked with

Virsage and Vern Fonk on the implementation. “We had very minor glitches. In my 15+ years of implementing this was by far the smoothest and the largest.”

The system continues to perform reliably. The company has not had a major outage since making the switch to WorkPlace, Rexroat said. What’s more, Vern Fonk continues to reap savings from lower hardware and maintenance costs. In the first year alone, Vern Fonk reported about \$120,000 in lower costs, according to Slade.

The system is flexible enough to be tailored to what Vern Fonk needs it to be as the company grows:

It’s secure. As an insurance company, Vern Fonk takes security seriously. Security meeting strict network and other regulatory requirements came out of the box with WorkPlace. The company faces an annual audit, which they’ve come out of with “flying colors” each time, Rexroat says. WorkPlace includes multilevel protection against viruses, spyware, worms and spam and is hosted at a SSAE 16 Type II certified data center that is a safe from fire, flood and theft.

It’s accessible. Users can access their files and applications from anywhere on any device. “If I’m in Seattle, or I’m in Portland, or wherever I might be, I can whip my laptop out and get on there and do anything I need to do,” Rexroat said.

It integrates seamlessly. Printing is a big deal for an insurance company. Before WorkPlace, the company had consistent printing problems. “The printing would freeze up constantly. In the insurance industry, you can’t get away with that,” Slade said. But after moving to Virsage WorkPlace, the company has had no such challenges.

Learn more about how WorkPlace can help your business scale by visiting virsage.com or calling 866-929-8092.

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