

Gray Consulting uses wireless access to increase productivity and customer satisfaction



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Brent Snyder, Manager of IT, Gray Consulting International Meetings & Incentives (GCI)

The challenge

Gray Consulting International Meetings & Incentives (GCI), a major meeting and event management firm, needed a way to keep its associates productive on the road. The nature of their business requires them to be in touch with both head office and customers at all times. By working with Sprint, GCI was able to give its senior staff wireless access to the information they need for a project – and for their customers. As a result, it was able to increase productivity and customer satisfaction.

About GCI

Based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, GCI was founded nine years ago. GCI creates and manages meetings and incentive programs; its main clients are pharmaceutical companies that hold education sessions for sales representatives and physicians, product launches, management meetings, and incentive programs. GCI’s broad expertise – including meeting and event management, hotel sales and marketing, food and beverage, airline and ground travel coordination, and data management – has made it a key player in the event management industry. And the agility of its mobile workforce enables it

to manage multiple projects both within the United States and globally.

GCI employs a dynamic workforce of 45 people in its Philadelphia office, with additional mobile contract workers in Palm Springs, CA and Washington, DC. Typically, employees work on-site during an event to ensure that it proceeds according to plan. This ground-level style of project management means that GCI employees are constantly on the move. Brent Snyder, manager of IT at GCI, is responsible for supporting GCI’s employees by keeping them connected and working at peak productivity. “We’re a completely mobile workforce,” says Snyder, “So we need to stay in constant touch with each other.”

Creating a competitive advantage

Because corporate budgets have been slashed across all industries, many companies have turned to outsourcing. Since meeting and event funds are limited, competitiveness among event vendors has taken on a new urgency. “Recently, many firms have started issuing RFPs in order to consolidate their meetings,” observes Snyder. “Unless you’re on that preferred vendor list, you won’t get any business.”

Business: Gray Consulting International Meetings & Incentives (GCI)

Industry: Professional Services

Solution: PCS Business ConnectionSM Enterprise Edition

Benefits:

- Increased customer satisfaction
- Increased mobile workforce productivity
- Wireless business connectivity

To get on the list, GCI needed to differentiate itself in the event planning market. An opportunity arose when a customer asked GCI to be accessible around the clock. “We had a request from a customer that said, ‘We need you available 24/7,’ recalls Snyder. “So we asked ourselves, ‘How do we make that happen?’ Everybody in our office has a laptop because practically every employee travels or works remotely. But it’s a real pain in the neck to haul your laptop around everywhere you go – all day, every day.” After studying the information needs of GCI’s associates, Snyder concluded that “wireless email access was the best option.”

An agile solution

Of all the tools a business has at its disposal, email is the most critical. So when GCI decided to simplify and streamline its corporate communications with a wireless solution, Snyder went with the most logical choice: PCS Business ConnectionSM Enterprise Edition from

Sprint. “I’ve outfitted our key personnel,” says Snyder. He considered other vendors’ wireless email solutions, but decided on PCS Business Connection because of its anytime access, its ability to work with a wide range of software and the coverage provided by the enhanced Sprint Nationwide PCS Network. By using PCS Business Connection Enterprise Edition with a PCS Vision Phone – in this case, the PCS Vision Smart Device (Handspring[™] Treo[®] 300) – GCI associates can now keep working wherever they are on the enhanced Sprint Nationwide PCS Network with secure, real-time access to corporate email and other vital business information. “They love it,” observes Snyder.

GCI uses Microsoft[®] Outlook[®] as its company email client. The associates at GCI love the fact that they can send and receive email and accept calendar appointments – as well as set up and assign tasks – all on their PCS Vision Phone. They also enjoy being able to receive an itinerary on the PDA for a plane ticket, and double-check their flight status at the same time. Plus they can then turn around, open up the PDA and use it as a phone. According to Snyder, the associates took to PCS Business Connection Enterprise Edition immediately. “The learning curve is short,” he notes. “They got it right away.”

Rapid response

PCS Business Connection Enterprise Edition helps GCI stay online and available for its customers. The company uses a Web registration tool that allows

meeting attendees to log in to a secure site and register for a meeting. Snyder can use his PCS Vision Phone to check the registration server’s functionality – and whether or not that system is up and running. If the server fails, PCS Business Connection Enterprise Edition sends Snyder an email when it happens. Snyder doesn’t have to wait until he’s in the office to find out what has occurred. Thanks to the email notification, Snyder is on the phone within moments of discovering the server’s status, “so I can call the customer before the customer calls me,” he says.

Sprint delivers the coverage GCI needs

By relying on the enhanced Sprint Nationwide PCS Network, Snyder can monitor GCI’s servers wherever he is. “While I was on vacation in Hawaii last May, the GCI office building lost power completely,” recalls Snyder. “I called the office on my Treo to find out what was going on and took the steps to fix it.” And the enhanced Sprint Nationwide PCS Network didn’t let him down: “Even over all that mountainous terrain in Hawaii, the call was clear,” he says. The Sprint wireless PCS coverage enables GCI to contact its customers across the country to let them know if there’s a problem.

A look to the future

GCI has been a long-term Sprint customer, with 15 employees taking advantage of PCS Shared MinutesSM and PCS to PCS Calling.SM Now that

GCI has moved into wireless data access with PCS Business Connection Enterprise Edition, they’re ready to take wireless data to the next level.

Databases play a crucial role in the way GCI delivers its services. Snyder foresees the day when GCI employees can access database information wirelessly through the Handspring[™] Treo[®] 300. “Our database administrator is currently working on a database solution for us to use while we’re on-site for a meeting. If we could carry the database on the PDA itself while being connected to a computer back in our Philadelphia office, we could work on the fly,” he explains. This added functionality would eliminate the need for an on-site laptop at all. “We’re very excited about the prospect of running a custom application over PCS Business Connection Enterprise Edition and the Treo,” says Snyder.

The payoff

GCI has only just started working with wireless email access. But the productivity gains are already apparent. “Since I’ve set up the email notification of our server status,” says Snyder, “I can save hours of time. Now I can get the server team working on it immediately if it goes down.”

Most importantly, GCI is creating a new way of doing business – and doing it better than their competitors. “Moving forward, I think there’s potential to roll this solution out to more associates,” says Snyder. “I would love to be able to send a PDA with PCS Business Connection Enterprise Edition on-site for every meeting.”



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