Georgia Firefighters Burn Foundation:
Technology Modernization Project

Upgrading technology for efficiency

GFBF Mission

We partner with the fire service and burn care community to provide fire safety and prevention education, support medical facilities and assist burn survivors in their recovery.

"Working with LAN Systems has been a game-changer for the GFBF. We've experienced a high level of service and have greatly increased our ability to meet the needs of the people we serve!" – Dennis Gardin, GFBF Executive Director

Executive Summary

Georgia Firefighters Burn Foundation (GFBF) needed a technology makeover. Struggling with older technology that was at the end of its useful life, they needed new solutions that included communication and collaboration tools to make them more efficient in the service of their mission. As the first recipient of the TechBridge Nonprofit Exchange, a crowdsource funding program for nonprofit technology projects, GFBF had funds to design and implement the right solution.

With the help of LAN Systems and TechBridge, GFBF was able to upgrade their entire network. They were not in a position to move entirely to The Cloud so a hybrid environment was designed by LAN Systems. This provided a customized infrastructure that that allowed them to utilize the best of both environments.

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CASE STUDY

Challenges

We had to be sure that the new environment provided all the features GFBF staff needed with minimum downtime. Upgrading their production IT system required planning, coordination and training to minimize the impact on productivity. Additionally, GFBF was installing a new server, new laptops and implementing a new way of working that required staff training.

A Hybrid Cloud Environment

We were certain that moving email and documents to the Cloud using Office 365 was the best solution for GFBF. Keeping the domain also made sense because of the number of users and shared resources. Deciding whether to have an on-premise server or a Cloud server required analysis. The organization chose client/server QuickBooks as the better choice for their operations so it had to be installed on their server. Opting for an on-premise server was based on functionality, economy and convenience.

- Microsoft Office 365 is being used for email

- SharePoint Online and One Drive for Business are being used for documents

- On-premise server with Microsoft Server 2012 R2 is being used for applications, including QuickBooks, and shared resource access

- New SonicWall firewall for security and network services

- Staff laptops were installed with docking stations so they have a workstation experience in the office with full mobility options

- Added wireless extension to cover all areas of the facility so staff and guests would have reliable access to Wi-Fi

Results, Return on Investment and Future Plans

GFBF has an enterprise-class IT infrastructure that will last for many years. As the recipient of the TechBridge Innovation award, GFBF was able to purchase new equipment. With the Microsoft donation program, they were able to obtain licenses for Office 365 and Server 2012 at no charge. Through TechSoup, GFBF obtained Symantec and QuickBooks at a greatly discounted price. These incentives allowed us to build a modern IT system that meets the high-standards for today's computing needs.

The improvement was immediate. Below are a few examples of the greatest productivity improvements:

- Staff has the ability to work anywhere, anytime with full access to email, documents and shared resources

- Data is available to the organization using Office 365 document management so that files are accessible anytime

- Staff has access to real-time collaboration tools for instant messaging, presence management and online video meetings using Skype for Business through Office 365

The staff at GFBF has acclimated well to their new system. In fact, they were quite surprised at how much time they have for other activities now that their IT system is in order. They are using the "extra" time to support their mission through fire safety education and programs for burn survivors.

"Before our technology overhaul, we would lose 25 hours a month in productivity and felt afraid our aging system would fail at any moment. Now, we have a stable and secure system that doesn't hold us back, instead we are expanding and growing."
—McKenzy Williams, GFBF Children Services Director