



On-Site Insight

In 2004, iCorps Technologies stabilized and standardized On-Site Insight's (OSI) predominantly Macintosh-based infrastructure. In the two years since, iCorps whole-business approach has evolved OSI's technology into a strategic tool that supports the company's business needs, sustains business changes and growth, and powers productivity.

On-Site Insight (OSI) conducts capital needs assessments on real estate properties throughout the United States for multifamily, institutional, and government clients. Taking a site-specific approach to property analysis, OSI prepares customized reports of its findings that include detailed cost projections, photographs, and graphed results. Over the past twenty years, this 15-person firm has performed more than 5,000 needs assessments and was a major contractor for HUD's REACT program.

OSI's Challenge

Internally, OSI runs on a Macintosh platform with networked iMacs and iBooks. Its clients, for the most part, are mainly Windows-based. Not surprisingly, OSI had technical difficulties as a result of platform incompatibilities.

Underlying systems issues also were apparent. Explains David Jackson, Senior Associate for OSI, "We were having problems with system reliability which was affecting our productivity." OSI realized that its limited in-house IT resources needed outside help to get the network and computer systems back on track.

OSI's criteria for a technology partner included specialized expertise in both Macintosh and Windows environments. Broad and flexible IT services were also needed in order to extend OSI's capabilities to handle its ongoing technology requirements. iCorps Technologies fit the bill.

In a characteristic first-step, iCorps performed an in-depth audit of OSI's existing systems, business processes, and long-term objectives. The findings: OSI's

aging computer software and systems were unstable, difficult to maintain, and were not set up to facilitate OSI's detail-intensive business processes. Compounding the problem—a number of operating systems were in use, including Mac OS 9 which Apple no longer supported. The resulting incompatibilities, workflow, and productivity problems indicated that OSI needed to modernize and confront specific support and maintenance issues.

The iCorps Solution

iCorps replaced the old Macintosh G3 server with a new Xserve, and upgraded to Mac OS X in order to stabilize OSI's systems. It standardized all workstations, and installed identical versions of operating systems and software to eliminate compatibility issues.

To ensure cross-platform compliancy, iCorps installed both Macintosh and Windows versions of applications so that all documents would be portable between the two environments. And, to sustain a consistent level of performance and operations, iCorps implemented a customized maintenance program for OSI that provided regularly scheduled on-site visits and 24/7 help desk support.

Making Technology Work

Over the course of the past two years, iCorps has suggested and implemented several important technology and workflow improvements that align OSI's technology more strategically with its specific business needs.

iCORPS' IT SERVICES AND SOLUTIONS FOR OSI

- Perform in-depth audit of existing systems, processes, and business objectives
- Stabilize and standardize OSI's Macintosh infrastructure
- Implement critical cross-platform compliance between Macintosh and Windows environments
- Establish 24/7 help desk and regularly scheduled on-site maintenance for ongoing system performance and health
- Implement in-house capabilities for remote access, wireless, and email
- Transition OSI from a peer-to-peer network model to a central file server for more efficient, secure, shared access to valuable stored data
- Reduce operating costs and improve business productivity

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David A. Jackson
Senior Associate
On-Site Insight, Inc.



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Accessibility OSI was set up on a peer-to-peer network model, meaning that company and employee information was stored on individual computers with limited capabilities for sharing data. Apart from the obvious risks of this model—data loss, crashes, unreliable backup strategies, security breaches—no information was accessible if an employee’s computer was not logged onto the network. iCorps eliminated the risks and accessibility issues using a central file server client where data is stored centrally and available 24/7.

Wireless In addition to a new, more secure and reliable wireless network that allows employees mobility within the office walls, iCorps created a separate wireless guest network that enables visitors to print and connect to the Internet. This expands OSI’s network capacity flexibly and without additional cost, and without risking unwanted access to sensitive corporate information.

Remote Access For OSI employees who perform on-site assessments at client properties across the country, remote access is critical. iCorps implemented a secure, reliable remote VPN connection that enables off-site employees to access the main server, email, and the Internet.

Email iCorps also removed the reliance and costs associated with OSI’s email hosting service by bringing that function in-house. iCorps set up email on OSI’s Xserve along with critical security features including a firewall, anti-virus, and anti-spyware protection. The solution is more cost-effective, flexible, and has increased capacity for a number of user accounts.

Future Plans

Many opportunities still remain for streamlining OSI’s business processes using technology. In addition to a review of the design and functionality of its corporate Website, OSI is considering a Web-based database to store and track building system and component costs. This database would be a first-phase module that could be ported later to a larger-scope database project. “Both projects,” Jackson mentions, “will require iCorps’ expertise.”

A Strategic Partnership

For each technical solution that iCorps implements for OSI, there is a business need that is met. iCorps’ proficiency in recognizing—and converting—technology’s potential to support the business has been extremely beneficial for OSI. “This has been a good year for us,” Jackson explains. “iCorps has helped OSI get the technology pieces in place that are allowing us to grow—both in terms of the business and our size.”

The company sees iCorps as a valuable, strategic partner that can evaluate and implement the right technology—and make it work for OSI’s business. “In 2004, we decided to try the relationship with iCorps for a year and see how it worked,” says Jackson. “We’re now approaching the end of 2006. iCorps is still here, and we have good results. From my perspective, this relationship works well.”



Boston Office
529 Main Street, Suite 109
Boston, MA 02129
Tel: 617.868.2000
Toll Free: 888.642.6484

New York City Office
350 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1104
New York, NY 10118
Tel: 212.967.3900
Toll Free: 888.642.6484

www.icorps.com

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