



Green Bay Harvest adds 3-5% annually to bottom line by switching to Google Apps



At a Glance

What they wanted to do

- eliminate confusion and errors associated with document versions and attachment management
- find an IT solution that made working across time zones a competitive advantage, not an obstacle, by enabling collaboration and teamwork

What they did

- launched Google Sites to securely share more information online without adding complexity
- brought internal teams and external partners into collaborative document-building, speeding project completion
- put internal information in order and eliminated roadblocks caused by "too big" document attachments

What they accomplished

- trimmed away cost and waste, adding efficiencies and gaining 3-5% on the bottom line
- optimised workflows, helping an intercontinental team communicate and collaborate with ease
- mastered version control, ensuring accuracy and productivity in all document use

Business

Green Bay Harvest, founded in 2005 by Jo Glass, creates and selects organic foods with exceptional nutritional properties, including Manuka Honeysuckers, the world's first organic Manuka Honey lozenge, and a variety of other healthful products. Green Bay's mission is to seek out the very best of these products, promote their benefits and make them widely available to the general public in a sustainable way. The foods are available in Waitrose, Ocado, 650 independent retailers in Europe and direct to organisations as part of employee wellness programs. Green Bay operates from two offices – one in Christchurch, New Zealand and the other in Cambridge, UK. Distribution partners are located in Athens, Bratislava, Dublin, Frankfurt, Prague, Riyadh, Singapore and Stockholm, and in multiple locations across the UK.

Challenge

Green Bay Harvest is a growing company with a team that's often on the go. With two offices in different time zones and continents, the company's staff works hard to stay synced on sales operations, finance, product marketing and brand support. The supplier base of 40+ companies is split evenly across these two locations. Staff from the UK office travel to and work from France, UK and NZ during the year and need to have access to enterprise data without the risk of carrying (and losing) sensitive company information on USB keys and laptops whilst travelling.

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—Jo Glass, Founder

What's more, Green Bay keeps a progressive attitude toward flexible worktimes, knowing that they can attract the best talent by letting employees work on "anytime, anyplace" schedules that meet their work/life needs. For example one member of the team has spent all of August at the Edinburgh Fringe festival whilst working on Green Bay duties 'between shows'. With two working mothers in key team positions, meetings and project hand-overs are conducted at times that actually enhance productivity across time zones – often late at night after kids are tucked into bed, or early in the morning.

"Sales and profits are on course to double for the third year running," says Jo Glass, Founder. This rapid growth means that resources and time are always scarce. We need to be able to access a great range of company documents, information and contacts quickly and concurrently so we can maximise the amount of time selling, identifying and controlling risks that be-devil all fast-growing businesses and identifying new opportunities for growth."

Green Bay's initial solution, a traditional software-based office suite, wasn't allowing this. "Our document server rapidly became a virtual warren of folders," Glass recalls. "It was almost impossible to find information quickly, if at all. As a start-up with no ICT or admin support, we needed an IT solution that was both sophisticated and easy to use."

Server-based email, too, was missing the mark. Because communications between the UK and NZ offices, and with customers and distributors, was initially managed via email using desktop clients, remote users had no access to the UK files. And files shared as email attachments carried the usual version control uncertainty. Managing information was time consuming and began to hinder growth.

Solution

According to Glass, "our Commercial Director had a private Gmail account which he found indefinitely better than his PC based email application. He also shared sales plans using Google Docs. We discovered that we could use Gmail accounts with our own company domain name so we thought 'Wow, this is a no brainer!'"

Glass recounts that for the users "Making the switch was completely painless and only took half of a day. The tools were completely intuitive, even for our low-tech founders. We transitioned from our desktop products and over to the Google cloud at our own pace."

Results

Green Bay measures significant process improvement and bottom-line benefits to the gains they've made by using Google Apps.

The Green Bay team started using Google Docs, integrated into Google Apps, for all sorts of document preparation and sharing. "We now can easily share drafts and evolving documents with our partners, including our PR agency and our international distributors. This lets us build and edit documents collaboratively, and helps us focus on managing the quality the information rather than emailing attachments all over the place."

It didn't take long before the team was exploring the full range of business solutions included in Google Apps, and putting them to work to build the business. Google Sites – an easy application that lets users build and publish pages on websites or intranets, without using code – paid off fast. Glass explains, "We started using Google Sites to create portals of information that we can review and update as a team. We can centralise information there, giving everyone access to the latest information, wherever they are. No more 'I'm sorry, but I don't think I got that doc, let me check my email, are you sure you sent it?' for our team. Google Sites helped us put everything that we need literally on the same page."

"From there it snowballed," she continues, "and we became big users of Google Calendar, managing holidays, promotions with retailers and events with everything synchronised with users' BlackBerrys. It's unbelievably convenient."

Glass adds, "Google Sites lets us easily collaborate and share information across time zones, and in whatever format we choose. It may sound trivial but the change in our mindset has significant benefits. We now have the capability to review richer information when making decisions around new products and marketing campaigns."

Workflow, too, has changed since Green Bay switched to Google Apps. "We now run the business around key workflows," Glass explains. "Even simple ideas like using dedicated inboxes to route trade orders for dispatch and invoices for payment are examples of how Google Apps has allowed us to upgrade workflows via email business rules and shared docs. This improves the quality of essential business processes – without needing meetings to configure software, or pay consulting fees to an outside IT pro. This is a huge boost for any start-up."

About Google Apps

Google Apps offers simple, powerful communication and collaboration tools for enterprises of any size in business, education, or government – all hosted by Google to streamline setup, minimise maintenance, and reduce IT costs. With Gmail, Google Calendar, and integrated IM, users can stay connected and work together with ease, even in private domains. And, using Google Docs, which includes word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation tools, they can share files and collaborate in real-time, keeping versions organised and available wherever and whenever users work.

For more information visit:

www.google.com/a

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Glass is confident that Google Apps has saved her firm time, frustration and money. “Google Apps is a ‘game changing’ service for start-ups,” she adds. “We estimate that it has saved us 20% in time, especially around information management. That’s crucial for start-ups, because that’s precious time we used to waste on admin and fumbling around with IT. We can now use that time to do more productive work with customers and partners. Customer support cases are probably 10% lower too. It’s also indescribably good for team morale as we feel we have the tools that big companies have (without the bureaucracy) – it has levelled the playing field.

“Since we’ve enhanced productivity with Google Apps, we easily add another 3-5% to the bottom line every year, which is an enormous benefit. Google Apps has changed the way we work – all for the better.”

