



J. D Smith and XBASE Technologies Partner to Keep on Trucking...

Founded in 1919, J.D. Smith provides integrated third-party distribution and logistic services to many well-known Canadian and international corporations. The company's infrastructure includes modern warehousing facilities, an extensive and well-maintained fleet, and best-of-breed IT systems. The company employs approximately 280 people.

Since its founding by John Dudley Smith, the company has built upon the belief that the close relationship it develops with its customers, and a strong commitment to superior service, are two of the cornerstones of its success. The company has worked constantly to customize and improve its operations to deliver a total service package that answers its customers' needs.

A major part of its success is due to its recognition of the important role that a sophisticated IT operation would play in the success of the company.

More than 300 North American companies - from beauty product to dangerous goods providers, food services to high-tech - outsource their warehousing and trucking requirements to J.D. Smith's teams of professionals, allowing them to focus time, effort and capital on their core businesses.

The Case for Managed IT

In 1998, J.D. Smith contracted with XBASE Technologies to manage its IT operations. Since then, the relationship has grown into a strategic partnership. According to Cam Arntsen, the company's Information Systems Manager, an effective IT system had become critical to the smooth running of J.D. Smith's operations, both on the warehousing and trucking sides of the business. Cam's job was to manage and develop the system so that it would further streamline and add value to the company's operations. However, as he said, "I spent my time putting out fires, solving desktop problems, restarting printers. I was being reactive instead of proactive, and I was missing important planning meetings."

The company uses an Oracle-based system with in excess of 80 terminals, both desktop and more complex and specialized applications. Running the system to its full potential would require a full-time Oracle-qualified Database Administrator plus a number of specialized people to run other elements of the system. Filling these positions presented several problems. While the individuals hired might be familiar with the IT systems, they would require time to learn the intricacies of J.D. Smith's two business areas before they could be truly valuable to the company – if they stayed with the company long enough. In addition, most positions would not provide enough work for full-time people.



The case for managed IT service became irrefutable and Cam Arntsen was given the task of finding an IT solution provider that could deliver the service and expertise required, freeing him up to play an important role in building the value of the company's IT system.

Why XBASE Technologies?

J.D. Smith management agreed that the IT solution provider they needed was one that had an expertise in working with medium-sized companies, yet had a real depth of experience in terms of their people and the systems they could handle.

XBASE Technologies answered those criteria. They had another important plus; before forming XBASE with partner Robin Chow in 1988, Stuart Demeter had provided IT services to J.D. Smith as a freelancer. His knowledge of the company helped move XBASE to the top of the list. As Cam Arntsen put it, "Stuart's familiarity with our company was certainly a plus, but they were able to clearly demonstrate to us that they had what it takes to provide the service we need. We hired them because they convinced us that nobody could do the job better."

XBASE's role at J.D. Smith is to ensure that all IT operations run smoothly. This includes trouble-shooting the company's desktop network, data administration and server maintenance. It also includes integrating the on-site and off-site aspects of the company's warehousing business to ensure that inventory and deliveries are in sync. XBASE also ensures that the Electronic Data Interface (EDI) and radio frequency systems to coordinate pick-up and storage are in top working order at all times.

Management of most of these functions are handled on-line but XBASE technicians are available around-the-clock to handle problems on-site when necessary. And, unlike many IT service providers, J.D. Smith's agreement with XBASE is very flexible. They're able to adjust their service level to meet specific long-or short-term requirements, often because a J.D Smith customer has a special, possibly seasonal, need that has to be handled.

XBASE provides all the services of a full scale, in-house IT department with added features: personnel are available 24/7, but without the salaries and associated overhead costs of full-time employees who wouldn't be required on a full-time basis. XBASE also has the depth of experienced senior personnel to ensure uninterrupted service brought about by people leaving the company.

Overall, taking into account the complexity of the J.D. Smith system, having XBASE manage its IT services costs the company a fraction of what it would cost to establish and run its own IT department – and without the headaches.