

CASE STUDY

AIS: Shelter from the Storm

Accelerated Information Systems, Inc. (AIS) is a solution provider dedicated to helping businesses implement Enterprise Content Management and workflow software. Founded by President Zaheer Master in 2005, AIS offers a stunning selection of software to their clients, most notably Laserfiche, an award-winning content management platform. As a Value-Added Reseller for Laserfiche and an official Microsoft Partner, AIS has garnered widespread attention since its inception. In both 2011 and 2013, AIS was named a Top Performer for the Financial Services Industry, and they are also an alumni of Goldman Sachs' 10,000 Small Businesses program.



At a Glance

AIS had outgrown their home-grown PBX when they discovered Jive. They were looking for a managed phone service to save time on system maintenance, and they also wanted to present a world-class enterprise image to their expanding client base. When AIS first started with Jive, the system was put to the ultimate test by Hurricane Sandy, which hit the same weekend they switched over. However, Jive's call forwarding and other features made it possible for AIS to continue with business as usual.



The Problem

Master first encountered the Laserfiche platform in 2005, and he was so impressed that he started Accelerated Information Systems less than a year later, aiming to resell the solution to other business owners. As AIS grew, Master and his team formed strategic partnerships with dozens of other content management platforms, including Microsoft Office 365—and with more variety came more customers. While the growth was great for business, it also placed additional pressure on their phone system.



AIS began with a home-grown PBX to minimize costs, and the firm relied on that phone system for well over seven years. With the increase in growth, however, Master found that he was constantly spending time on maintenance. “We had outgrown the system, and I was the only one who knew how to fix it,” said Master in a recent interview. “If we lost power or if the server went down, I would need to drop what I was doing and fix it. If I was out traveling, we’d be stuck until I could get back to the office.” Additionally, as AIS gained prestige, Master realized they would need to obtain a richer feature set, one that would allow them to present the best possible image to their customers. “We needed to obtain the virtual presence of a larger company,” Master said, “and we also didn’t want a single point of failure. So we started looking for something that would solve these joint problems.”

The Solution

As Zaheer searched for a new service, Jive Communications soon emerged as a key contender in the Hosted VoIP arena. “We work primarily with cloud-based systems, so the fact that Jive was also cloud-based was a huge bonus for us,” said Master. “We were also wary of the other providers who were nickel and diming us at every point during the consultation stage.” The low initial cost of entry and extensive feature set were major selling points for Master and his team, who wanted to keep expenses low while still getting the enterprise-style presence they needed. Within a few weeks, they had signed on with Jive. The switch was set for a Friday night that October, to give the system time to adjust over the weekend. “We just flipped a few switches and left the office at 5:30 that evening, with the phones ready to go.”

HURRICANE SANDY STRIKES

It wasn’t long before a storm came crashing down for AIS—literally. Hurricane Sandy, the second costliest hurricane in United States history, hit New York the same night that AIS

installed Jive. It tore through the tristate area, and many local customers had to relocate their information from datacenters or change in-house to backup sites. To top it off, most phone and internet services in the city went down.

This could have resulted in catastrophe for AIS, but thanks to Jive, they were able to assist all of their customers with ease and professionalism. According to Master, “Everything south of 34th street was a mess, but throughout all of that our customers were able to get to our phones with Jive’s cell phone forwarding. It was pretty much business as usual!” His house regained power and internet about six hours after the storm, and the staff of AIS set up camp in his den. Master’s pool table became the primary workspace as agents continued to close deals. “We were able to maintain a professional look even though we were entirely reliant on cell phones to run our business.”

KEY ADVANTAGES

The need to project a world-class image, no matter what, is something that AIS shares with many of today’s startups and small businesses. Below are just a few of the advantages that convinced AIS that Jive was the best option for their needs:

Call Forwarding: For a busy entrepreneur, having sophisticated call forwarding is almost a necessity. For AIS, it was a lifesaver. Jive’s Find Me/Follow Me system allowed AIS to set up an automatic fallback, so that when internet service was down and emergency struck, they could forward all customer calls to a predetermined number.

Dial Plan Editor: Jive’s visual Dial Plan Editor was appealing to AIS because of its simplicity and ease of use. With a home-built PBX, adding an auto attendant or setting up holiday hours and greetings could take up to an hour. But with the Dial Plan Editor, AIS was able to rearrange their entire phone procedure in under a minute, simply by clicking and dragging the intuitive ring steps.

Pricing: For a small business, pricing is crucial when it comes to selecting software. Unlike most VoIP providers that charge for additional features, Jive offers a flat



monthly rate determined by the number of users per system. Since AIS was primarily interested in obtaining the benefits of a managed service and a wide feature set, the ability to include features without worrying about cost was a key factor in their decision.

Sunny Days with Jive

Long after the rubble of Sandy cleared, Master and his team stayed on with Jive, and are excited to continue using the service. “The thing we really enjoy about Jive is that it makes us look like a more professional organization. For small businesses, you want to create the impression that you’re bigger than you are. A lot of people will ask about the size of our company, and they’ll be shocked to hear we only have eight people on staff. That’s largely because of Jive.”

*“Not only did we survive the hurricane, but we **thrived** in spite of it.”*

ZAHEER MASTER, PRESIDENT