



Microsoft Windows XP Professional Customer Solution Case Study



Designers and Manufacturers
Donor Walls • Plaques • Awards • Memorials

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Manufacturing

Customer Profile

W&E Baum, located in Freehold, New Jersey, is a manufacturer of memorials. Businesses, universities, hospitals, and churches hire Baum to create commemorative memorials. Baum has 20 employees.

Business Situation

An order-processing system based on mail, faxes, and e-mail made entering and tracking some 700 orders a month inconsistent and error-prone. Baum also needed to strengthen its network security.

Solution

Baum used a combination of Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional, Windows Small Business Server 2003, and Office Small Business Edition 2003 to design a Web-based workflow and improve IT security and performance.

Benefits

- › More efficient order processing
- › Improved remote problem resolution
- › Near elimination of pop-up ads
- › Protection against data loss

Memorial Manufacturer Streamlines Order Processing, Assures Network Security

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Maurice Zagha, Chief Executive Officer, W&E Baum

Over the past 80 years, W&E Baum has become one of the leading manufacturers of memorials in the United States. Because its products literally have its customers’ names on them, precise attention to detail, quality, and deadlines is critical. However, the company’s order-processing workflow was inconsistent, inefficient, and error-prone, while junk e-mail messages and Internet pop-up ads plagued workers and presented IT security issues. To revamp Baum’s order-processing workflow and address security concerns, Baum turned to Microsoft® Certified Partner Silicon East. Silicon East crafted an integrated solution using Microsoft Windows® XP Professional, Windows Small Business Server 2003, and Office Small Business Edition 2003. The new solution has resulted in increased customer satisfaction and retention, increased employee productivity, and improved desktop security.



Situation

W&E Baum, a Freehold, New Jersey-based company with approximately 20 employees, manufactures the memorials that hundreds of corporations, universities, hospitals, churches, and synagogues use to thank, honor, and reward individuals and commemorate events. Recently, the company was asked to create the Wall of Immigration for Ellis Island, a 750,000-name project.

Managing significant amounts of data with 100 percent accuracy is Baum's highest priority. However, as Baum's business grew, its paper-based order-processing workflow expanded into an inconsistent and error-prone combination of faxes, mail, and even sticky notes. Sometimes, information was miscommunicated or lost—and mistakes cast in bronze are very expensive to correct.

"Our order inefficiencies were hindering our ability to respond to customers quickly," says Maurice Zagha, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for W&E Baum. "Having information in so many places and formats made it difficult to get quotes out, respond to customer questions about order status, process change-orders, and prioritize jobs."

Also, with the sensitive nature of donor recognition products and the need to keep the business virus-free and stable, Baum wanted to tighten network security—ensuring data confidentiality, secure communications for remote employees, and controlled access to company personal computers and servers. "Our users were constantly complaining about spam and Internet pop-up ads affecting their productivity," Zagha says. "When you delete 100 junk e-mail messages, you might accidentally delete one order buried in the middle of them. And pop-up ads present a huge security issue and slow down systems dramatically. We wanted to get rid of them."

Solution

Baum turned to Silicon East, a Microsoft® Certified Partner, for help. Silicon East recommended that Baum upgrade its 20 networked personal computers to the latest Microsoft small business software. The first step in this process was to upgrade the desktop operating system to Microsoft Windows® XP Professional to provide dramatic improvements in reliability, security, ease of use, and remote assistance.

Silicon East next worked with Baum to design a new, all-digital order-processing solution using Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2003 and Microsoft Office Small Business Edition 2003. Small Business Server 2003, which is part of Microsoft Windows Server System™ integrated server software, includes the Windows Server™ 2003 operating system, along with software for messaging and collaboration, highly secure Internet access, sophisticated database capabilities, and Web page creation tools.

Office Small Business Edition 2003 includes Microsoft Office Word 2003, Office Excel 2003, the Office PowerPoint® 2003 presentation graphics program, and the Office Outlook® 2003 messaging and collaboration client. In addition, it includes Outlook 2003 with Business Contact Manager for tracking and managing business contacts and Office Publisher 2003 for cost-effectively creating sales and marketing materials.

"When you use Microsoft software for small business, you really get the feeling that the products were designed to work with one another," says Marc Harrison, Silicon East President. "There just is nothing else that offers an integrated desktop, application, server, and remote-access solution that small businesses need."

“The solution has freed a great deal of time for everyone at Baum.... That’s time that can be better spent on serving customers and winning new business.”

Maurice Zagha, Chief Executive Officer,
W&E Baum

After the solution was in place at Baum for about a year, Silicon East recommended that the company upgrade its Windows XP Professional-based desktops with Windows XP Service Pack 2, an update to Windows XP Professional. Windows XP Service Pack 2 offers increased desktop performance and additional security features such as Windows Firewall and Internet Explorer Pop-Up Blocker to help minimize security risks on every desktop computer.

The installation of Windows XP Service Pack 2 was fast and easy. “When we rolled out Windows XP Service Pack 1, it took about 30 minutes, or \$75, per computer,” Zagha says. “The Service Pack 2 rollout required just 5 minutes per computer, reducing our implementation costs by about 95 percent. And because it was implemented overnight, the update was completely transparent to users.”

Similarly, the Windows Small Business Server 2003 installation took just three hours. “We had installed and upgraded older versions of Small Business Server, so we had planned for as much as a week for installation,” Harrison says. “We were thrilled when we came in Sunday and had everything up and running in three hours. Windows Small Business Server 2003 has tremendous wizard capabilities; you walk through a series of dialog boxes and answer questions, and when you’re finished, you have a configured server. Baum was open for business on Monday without any delay.”

The real success of the Baum solution comes from the integration of the Microsoft small business products—for desktop and server—into a seamless whole that employees can use without knowledge of or concern for the underlying components.

“Microsoft small business software works so well together from a user’s point of view that it feels like one package,” Harrison says.

“There’s no worry about what’s running on the server or on the desktop or if you can do one thing in the office and another remotely. The answer is always yes.”

Underneath the seamless user experience, the different Microsoft products are providing a range of functions and value. For example, Baum employees use many features in Outlook 2003 to streamline communication and better serve customers. Public calendars allow the staff to view and coordinate meetings and customer order commitments. And Outlook enables Baum workers more easily manage internal e-mail to facilitate workflow as projects move through Baum’s various departments such as sales, design, and manufacturing.

“Shared calendars are especially helpful with rush orders,” Zagha says. “Each department manager can easily see priorities and timelines on orders that require special handling. Mistakes are minimized, and orders are delivered as promised.”

Windows Small Business Server 2003 includes Microsoft Windows SharePoint® Services, which Silicon East used to create a secure, permission-based collaboration site where customers enter and update orders and Baum staff members monitor job progress. When a customer contacts Baum with a new job, Zagha spends 15 minutes setting up a private Windows SharePoint Services site for the customer and another 10 minutes on the phone explaining to the customer how to use it. The customer then enters the order details into an Office document on the site. When the inevitable change occurs—for example, a name changes due to a marriage or addition to a family—the customer easily makes the change directly to the project’s file on Baum’s server.

The new Web-based order-processing solution gives Baum staff members—salespeople,

front-office staff, and manufacturing floor employees—consistent and instant visibility into the status of every job from any computer. As a result, the new process eliminates errors that could result from multiple communications between Baum and its customers by phone, through faxes, and in e-mail.

What's more, because Windows Small Business Server made it possible for Baum to add more people to its network, the company was able to put personal computers on the factory floor. This allows the engraving department to send an e-mail containing an Adobe Acrobat image (or fax) of the product to be engraved directly to the customer for final approval, eliminating any chance for error.

"Before Windows XP Professional and Windows Small Business Server 2003, we would have never considered putting a computer with access to our network and the Internet on the factory floor," Zagha says. "There were just too many security and dependability issues. But this experience has shown us that it's not only possible, but also simple. Being able to send a final proof directly from the software driving our engraving machines to our customer provides the ultimate level of order confirmation and customer service."

Benefits

W&E Baum's new Web-based order-processing solution has given the small business a cost-effective way to make its small staff more productive, increase customer satisfaction, and reach new customers. "Microsoft small business software has allowed us to become more competitive," Zagha says. "It's allowed us to do more with fewer people and to increase our response times in all areas of our business. I'm able to trim different processes and rely more on the software than on labor.

It's like having a supervisor on duty around the clock."

Customers are extremely impressed by the ease of using Baum's SharePoint site for order placement. "Our Microsoft technology gives customers huge confidence that their order is going to be accurate, and that's important because the correctness of names is very important to people," Zagha says. "I don't think any of our competitors have this capability. We use it to win new business."

The new solution has helped Baum improve productivity and efficiency, improve remote problem resolution, safely extend network access to remote employees, and dramatically improve network security by eliminating nearly all junk e-mail messages and intrusive Internet pop-up ads.

More Efficient Order Processing

Baum's new SharePoint site for order entry and collaboration provides tremendous productivity improvements for Baum's staff and customers. Order issues are easier to resolve with accurate order information shared among all employees. There is no longer a maze of faxes, e-mail messages, and phone calls surrounding each order. The customer-entered order information resides in one place, and proofs of the job are sent directly from the manufacturing floor to the customer for final approval.

"The solution has freed a great deal of time for everyone at Baum," Zagha adds.

"Because our office workers are no longer bogged down in mundane administrative tasks, they're far more productive. I'd say the solution has removed six to seven hours of managing text changes per project. That's time that can be better spent on serving customers and winning new business."

Improved Outlook follow-up features, such as colored flagging and the ability to set

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reminders directly within an e-mail message, enable Baum’s staff to view e-mail messages by group—for example, by customer order—and be reminded to take the appropriate action on time. Silicon East trained Baum users to customize Outlook to automatically sort incoming mail into different folders for each customer.

Improved Remote Problem Resolution

The new solution not only has made Baum’s staff more productive, but also has made Silicon East’s job of monitoring and maintaining Baum’s network far easier. Using the Remote Assistance feature in Windows XP Professional, Silicon East technicians can resolve problems on Baum desktops without ever leaving home. Remote Assistance lets users share management of their computers with someone else over a network or the Internet to view and fix a problem.

“Remote Assistance reduces our travel time by 75 percent and reduces our customer response time by at least 90 percent,” says Joe Kaplovitz, Senior Member, Technical Staff at Silicon East. “Our technicians are able to work from home, which is a big benefit to them as well as to our customers, because customers receive instant service. If a technician is on-site with one customer and gets a call from another customer, he or she can just log on to any Internet-connected computer and fix that customer’s problem without leaving the first customer’s site.”

Also, automated alerts in Windows Small Business Server help Silicon East to easily detect small issues affecting Baum workstations, such as diminishing disk space, before they become problems that could affect the efficiency of Baum workers. Silicon East has integrated Windows Small Business Server with Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 (which is also part of Windows Server System) so that its technicians receive alerts on wireless Pocket PCs in real time and even

connect to remote sites and fix small issues right from the Pocket PC.

Says Harrison, “The ability to run a virtual office tangibly boosts Silicon East’s bottom line: Our ratio of clients per technical staff member is roughly twice that of the industry average. The productivity gains and customer satisfaction improvements enabled by Windows XP Professional are amazing.”

Improved Service to Mobile Workers

The Remote Web Workplace feature of Windows Small Business Server has made it possible for remote Baum employees to easily and securely connect to the company network. Remote Web Workplace is a remote portal that allows authorized users to access other computers over the Internet. Users can connect to the Remote Web Workplace through an Internet address and take advantage of remote-access features.

Baum salespeople use Remote Web Workplace to check delivery dates, close deals, check on new prospects, and submit orders from their branch offices or a customer’s office using any personal computer with an Internet connection. “Using Remote Web Workplace to work remotely is as easy as surfing the Web. Customers and employees absolutely love it,” Kaplovitz says.

Remote Web Workplace, together with the enhanced security features provided in Windows XP Service Pack 2, has opened up new possibilities for Baum personnel management. With these new capabilities, Baum was free to hire a national sales manager who lives 150 miles from the company’s headquarters and didn’t want to relocate. This individual is able to work remotely, yet securely access the entire company network.

“We would never have been able to even consider bringing this person on board without secure remote-access technology,”

Zagha says. "Our new infrastructure enables anytime, anywhere computing, which gives us access to a broader pool of talent and gives our employees a great deal more flexibility in the way they structure their work hours."

Decrease in the Number of Pop-up Ads

Since installing Windows XP Professional Service Pack 2, Baum has seen significant security improvements in its network with better protection against viruses, hackers, and worms through a strengthened Windows Firewall, a pop-up blocker for Microsoft Internet Explorer, and the new Windows Security Center.

Baum employees were inadvertently installing unauthorized software, or "spyware," on their computers by innocently clicking on pop-up windows that they encountered while browsing the Web for new prospects. These pop-up windows actually collect data from the individual's computer, possibly infect it with viruses, and dramatically slow performance.

"It takes at least one hour, usually more, to clean an infected computer," Zagha says. "Our cost of cleaning one infected computer was at least \$125, and we were having Silicon East clean up one computer every four to six weeks. Thanks to the new security features in Windows XP Service Pack 2, that's \$1,000 a year we're no longer spending."

Baum employees are now able to safely use the Internet to search for new prospects as well as to schedule shipping by creating bills of lading on the shipping providers' Web sites.

Another major benefit of eliminating pop-up ads is vastly improved system performance. "The Internet Explorer Pop-Up Blocker not only immediately stopped the pop-up infiltration, but we've experienced greater system performance," Zagha says. "Pop-ups used to soak up resources like a sponge.

Windows XP Service Pack 2 has put a stop to them."

These days, junk e-mail at Baum has been practically eliminated. "We've knocked spam down to just about nothing," Zagha says. "As a result, there's been a noticeable decrease in the number of viruses slipping through. And no more complaints."

Protection Against Data Loss and Harmful System Changes

The new solution solves two other problems: Users accidentally deleting documents from the server, and users making document changes that they later regret. The Windows Small Business Server Volume Shadow Copy feature addresses both situations by enabling users to restore a shadow copy of a file or even an entire folder without IT assistance.

Similarly, the System Restore and Device Driver Rollback features in Windows XP Professional allow Baum to reverse harmful system changes. For example, if Silicon East installs hardware drivers or software on Baum's network and later discovers that the addition is causing a problem, the service provider can immediately undo the change and return the desktop, or the entire network, to its previous working state.

Single, Unified View of Security Settings

The new management console in Windows Small Business Server can provide to Silicon East and Baum a unified view of Baum's network security status and convenient way to manage key security settings on each desktop computer.

In summary, Zagha says of its new Microsoft-based solution, "Before this solution, we were not always starting the sales process properly with our clients because of our inability to get back quickly with bids," he says. "Now we can respond to customers faster, ensure nearly 100 percent order accuracy, expend far less

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: www.microsoft.com

For more information about Silicon East, Inc., products and services, call (732) 536-3535, or visit the Web site at: www.silicon-east.com

For more information about W&E Baum products and services, call (800) 922-7377, or visit the Web site at: www.webaum.com

labor on managing order changes, and grow our business without hiring more people.”

Windows XP Professional

Microsoft Windows XP Professional gives you the freedom to do what you want at home and at work—simply, reliably, and securely.

For more information about Windows XP Professional, go to: www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro

Microsoft Office

Microsoft Office is the business world's chosen environment for information work that provides the software, servers, and services that help you succeed by transforming information into impact.

For more information about the Microsoft Office System, go to: www.microsoft.com/office

Windows Small Business Server 2003

Windows Small Business Server 2003 enables your small business to be more productive with fewer resources.

For more information about Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2003, go to: www.microsoft.com/sbs

Software and Services

- › Microsoft Windows Server System
 - Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2003
 - Microsoft Windows Server 2003
 - Microsoft Exchange Server 2003
- › Microsoft Windows XP Professional
 - › Microsoft Office System
 - Microsoft Office Small Business Edition 2003
 - Microsoft Office Outlook 2003
 - › Technologies
 - Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services

Hardware

- › 1 HP ProLiant ML-350/G3 server with five hard disks in a RAID 5 array
- › 20 built-to-order Intel Pentium 3 and Pentium 4 processor-based workstations

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