**Case Study: Support for a company using “Cloud Computing”**

[**http://www.ecommercetimes.com/rsstory/71235.html?wlc=1289778788**](http://www.ecommercetimes.com/rsstory/71235.html?wlc=1289778788)

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Sales, marketing and online transactions can all be given a boost by cloud-based e-commerce systems, whether they're harnessed by enterprises or smaller businesses. One small company, MarkMaster, has been able to streamline several aspects of its business using cloud solutions. "It's totally changed our business," said CEO Kevin Govin.

Businesses are increasingly using cloud and e-commerce to improve how they do sales, marketing and online transactions.

One smaller company, Tampa-based [MarkMaster](http://www.MarkMaster.com), has quickly moved to nearly all-paperless sales transactions, found new customers via online networks, and increased the amount of product it sells to its existing clients. This was accomplished without a lot of additional IT or business-process spending by using cloud-based collaborative business commerce solutions.

To learn more about how MarkMaster is conducting its business better, BriefingsDirect's Dana Gardner, Principal Analyst at [Interarbor Solutions](http://www.Interarbor-Solutions.com), recently interviewed Kevin Govin, the CEO at MarkMaster.

**http://www.ecommercetimes.com/images/work/icon_speaker_14x14.jpg**[**Listen to the podcast**](http://www.ecommercetimes.com/shared/audio/ect-gardner-2010-11-13.mp3) **(12:52 minutes).**

Here are some excerpts:

**Kevin Govin:** E-commerce has definitely changed our reach, which is national and international. We have a plant in Birmingham, England, that we fulfill from as well for our American-based companies. We service nine of the top 10 banks in United States. We do eight of the top 10 insurance companies. Without cloud computing, there's just no way we would have even considered doing that. ... This all has been just a godsend for us.

It's totally changed our business. I laughed a little bit at your intro, when you talked about going "paperless." One of our main product lines is rubber stamps, and it seems counter-productive to go paperless with what we do.

Yet we have changed a lot. Now, 95 percent of our orders come electronically. We have one location in the United States that services all of the U.S. and Europe. How could we do that without some kind of cloud transacting? It just makes the most sense. Over the last 10 years, I think 99 percent of our new customers have been coming through those kinds of systems.

Most of our products are considered office supplies. So I have to look like the big Office Maxes, Office Depots, and that kind of thing. That's how we present ourselves. Even though we're the biggest in our industry, we're still a small company.

We deal mostly with Fortune 500 companies. We sell rubber stamps, name badges, name plates, and interior/exterior signage. It's a unique field, kind of a niche market, as rubber stamps are a mature market. But we seem to be gaining market share, so that's been great for us.

Top-line, our sales are growing at least 10 to 15 percent a year for the last 10 years, and that's the same time-frame that we've been on e-commerce and now cloud computing. So we have to believe that that's a lot of it. Our industry is shrinking as well. There were 1,200 rubber stamp makers, now there are 400.

**Quick Turnaround From Cloud**

We definitely use the cloud-computing models to go out and sell. There is nothing jazzy about a rubber stamp. Name badges are pretty much specified by the customers. So we are not out there selling anything new or exciting as far as that's concerned.

But we have changed our model, and our salespeople don't travel with the product. They travel with *the computer* and they show what we can do online and what kinds of services we can provide.

We can turn around on a customer in two days, because it's just all uploading something. There are no ports to connect or anything highly technical at all.

Because both on the buyer and the supplier supply side we are having hosted solutions or in the cloud, it makes it a lot easier. There used to be a real reluctance from the customers to want to put us on board, because I might only be (US)$100,000 year in spend, and they were going to outlay a lot of IT to connect me.

Now, with the cloud solutions, there is very little IT on either end. I'd imagine that it's even easier now than it was with the paper system before, because we can communicate to their end-users that we're out here, and we're ready to be bought from.

We work heavily within the [Ariba](http://www.ariba.com) (Nasdaq: ARBA) network, and because of that, now we are an Ariba Silver supplier. So, there's a lot of pluses that go with that, and we use a lot of banner ads and things like that.

We're posted out on [Ariba's Discovery](https://service.ariba.com/Discovery.aw/631356/aw?awh=r&aws=2yqZXA20uveN5tZS&awssk=&dard=1#b0) area, so they can find us very easily, and when they look at that, they see number of connections, and we get instant credibility on top of that. Then, of course, we even use the [Ariba LIVE](http://www.ariba.com/aribalive/2011/) event. That's huge for us, because it puts us in front of all those users that are looking for somebody like us.

One of the larger banks that we deal with, when we originally started with them, weren't even considering us as a supplier, but they found us on the Ariba Discovery network. They called us and said, "Can you really do all of this. You're a small supplier?"

We showed them our list of what we have, where we'd already made Silver. So they knew we were vetted already by the supplier and we ended up with the business. It wasn't necessarily in a [RFQ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Request_for_quotation) kind of environment either. It was "Wow. You can do this, and you're the supplier we want and, in our case, you're a minority supplier." So, it was just having that all together.

**Can't Always Be There**

But they found us on Ariba. We didn't solicit them. I mean, we had been soliciting them, and they knew of us, but we can't always be there when the customers need these products now. It's just too hard, because our products are needed every day. So, that came out very well for us.

Bottom-line, we have had year-over-year growth, and our customer service department has not grown, or added anybody to that staff. How does that work, because we've grown exponentially? The reality is online systems.

We proactively give them the information as to the status of their order, and they can actually see it go through our plan step-by-step. Does everybody need that information? No, but it does keep them from calling customer service. So it's definitely changed.

Now, 10 years ago, we were 95 percent paper, and it's just totally flipped. So, you can count on your hand the overhead that this gets rid of.

We're always talking about is transacting in the cloud and getting orders and billing. The billing part is where we want our customers to go next, because it seems like the front-end integration is great, but on the back end there are 100,000 different ways that people want us to bill them and get paid -- [EDIs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_Data_Interchange) or [ACH](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automated_Clearing_House) or whatever.

We see it coming. People are migrating to the pay element, so that everything is integrated, and that's great for us. It turns money faster. I don't deal with credit cards as much, all of which cost me a lot of overhead.

Remember, my products are $5 or $6. People buy one at a time. So handling invoices is just a nightmare. I get 20,000 invoices every day. We need to upload them, link them, and know the bill is okay.

My clients are not the kind of clients that aren't paying me because they don't have the money. They're the kind of clients that aren't paying because I didn't do the paperwork correctly. So having that end-to-end order-to-pay integration is where we see it's coming next for us in integrating the whole cycle. Some of my larger banks have definitely gotten on-board with that and it's great, and for a small company, it changed my cash-flow as well. http://www.ectnews.com/images/end-enn.gif



**Answer the following from the case study of the stamp maker**

**(20 Marks each):**

1. Communicate in the workplace - Advise your client some of the computing developments that are helping the e-business side of this stamp making business in:
   1. Sales

* New clients via the website
* More stock to existing clients
* Representatives no longer have to carry samples because they can access the website via a computer and show potential clients the range of stock available
  1. Marketing
* Quick turnaround of orders – usually within two days
* Customers can place orders at a time that is suitable for them and not have to wait for a rep to visit
* Customers can check the progress of their order from start to finish via the website
  1. Transactions
* Invoices are linked to the orders so they are sent automatically

1. Policy development for client support procedures - How can helpdesk provide effective support to these computing developments:

* Be trained and knowledgeable about the type of transactions and e-commerce that is provided by the company
* Have an understanding of the process of uploading the data and how this becomes the end product
* Keep up to date with cloud computing

1. Relate to clients on a business level - Discuss the overall impact on sales, marketing and transactions of this stamp making business dealing with change doing away with paper-based transactions and moving into e-business:

* Clients no longer have to wait for a rep to place an order pr view the range of products that are available
* Transactions are linked to automatically generated invoices so that instead of masses of paper that could get lost or forgotten these invoices are sent electronically
* Reps no longer have to carry the whole range of products with them when they visit a client as they can access the website from the clients premises and upload their order immediately
* Clients can receive their order in as little as two days as there isn’t any physical work to be done
* Clients can also track their order from start to finish which will take a lot of pressure off the help desk support team

1. Provide first-level remote help desk support - If the staff are mobile and require mobile workstations such as netbooks recommend a two products with suitable warranty

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Item | Reason | Warranty | Cost | URL |
| ASUS 1001PX Series Netbook | * 9 hours battery life * 250 gb hard drive * Windows 7 OS | 12 months pick and return warranty | $497 | http://www.mwave. com.au/sku-54010096- ASUS\_1001PX\_Series \_Netbook\_Intel\_Atom\_ N450\_(1\_66GHz\_ 667MHz\_FSB\_512K\_ Cache)\_Proce |
| HP Mini 210-1015TU Netbook | * Windows 7 OS * 160 gb hard drive * 802.11b/g WLAN | 12 months warranty | $368.00 | http://www.mwave.com. au/sku-54030025-HP\_ Mini\_210\_1015TU\_ Netbook\_Intel\_Atom\_ N450\_1\_66GHz\_1GB \_DDR2\_10\_1&quot;\_ WSVGA\_LED |

1. Provide one-to-one instruction - Electronic records of invoices and transactions, the customer database, product catalogues are critical records and may require local storage (e.g. QNAP NAS) and remote storage (e.g. HUMYO).

Recommend two solutions for 4TB Local Storage

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Item | Reason | Cost | URL |
| Western Digital My Book Studio II | * Can be formatted for both Windows and Mac * User upgradable * Backup software * 5 year warranty * Green IT * RAID | $379.99 | <http://www.amazon.com> /dp/B002BH3ZCU/ref= asc\_df\_B002BH3ZCU 1336786?smid=ATVP DKIKX0DER&tag=nextagus 0000166-20&linkCode= asn&creative =395093&creativeASIN =B002BH3ZCU |
| Seagate BlackArmor NAS 220 2-Bay 4 TB | * RAID * Automatic backup * Used as a FTP server * Used to stream media * Remote access to files * 5 year warranty | $378.99 | <http://www.amazon.com> /dp/B002HKEQZ6/ref=asc\_ df\_B002HKEQZ61336992? smid=ATVPDKIKX0DER &tag=nextagus0000166-20&linkCode=asn&creative =395093&creativeASIN= B002HKEQZ6 |

Recommend two solutions for 20GB Remote Storage

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Item | Reason | Cost | URL |
| ZumoDrive | * Can be used with most OSs * Has data encryption * Cloud appears local to file system * Content streaming | $6.99 per month for 25GB | <http://www.zumodrive> .com/pricing |
| Dropbox | * Use with Windows, mac and linux * Automatically syncs when new files or changes are detected * Access files from any computer * Files are secured | $9.99 per month for 50 GB | <http://www.dropbox> .com/pricing# |