CASE STUDY

Find Out How a Connecticut Business Swiftly Took Their IT Program from Lagging to Cutting Edge

Environmental Systems Corp. found the perfect partner in Charles IT, who upgraded their IT operations, freeing internal IT employees to focus all their time on customer needs.

When their email system crashed one weekend in 2018, Environmental Systems Corporation (ESC) had to face a fact: They needed help with managing their internal IT. Though ESC consistently provided state-of-the-art technology for buildings and campuses for their customers, there was little time left over to focus on their own IT systems and processes. This deficit left ESC in the position they didn't want to be in—responding to internal events as they were happening, rather than preventing what they can. With the crash of an essential system like email, they could no longer continue to ignore their needs and operate in reactive mode. ESC knew that they had to build a proactive plan for internal IT management before another big disruption like this took place.

Luckily, ESC found just the right partner for the job in Charles IT. The company's chief operating officer, Michael Mullin, says that Charles IT worked with them to align their priorities and flesh out a plan.

"Now we have a roadmap, we have a vision, and it all makes sense with best practices today."

- Michael Mullin,
ESC Chief Operating Officer

Situation

ESC Needed to Elevate its Corporate Tech to Match the Excellence They Delivered to Customers

ESC is a 50-year-old Connecticut company with over 150 employees providing technology systems and services that support the operations of buildings and campuses. Their services include:

- ☑ Automated energy systems such as heating, air conditioning, and lighting
- ☑ Security systems, such as video surveillance and access controls
- ☑ Mechanical and audiovisual systems

Although ESC has a three-member internal IT group, they prioritize the technological needs of the company's customers, providing services for the systems it sells. As the company continued to grow, they had less time to focus on their internal IT, according to Chief Operating Officer Michael Mullin.

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>
> - Michael Mullin

A few years ago, the company's leadership realized ESC had outgrown its central infrastructure. "If there's a cutting edge and then kind of a lagging edge and then a middle edge, we were on the back end," Mullin recalls.

At the time, ESC was using a physical server for its email, and the software was becoming too much for the old hardware to handle. The system ultimately failed one weekend as technicians were attempting to transfer the server to a third party. "Email is a critical tool for communicating with ESC's customers," Mullin says. "When that goes down, even on a weekend day, it can really impact the business."

Company officials realized that the problem with the email server was symptomatic of broader issues related to the company's tech infrastructure. A comprehensive fix was needed. Once they began this exploration, ESC realized several upgrades were in order—steps that could improve efficiency and move the company into a first-class IT program.

Solution

ESC Gains an MSP Partner

ESC turned to [Charles IT](#) for emergency help converting the server and Mullin was impressed with the experience. He decided to trust the company as a managed service provider (MSP) to bring ESC's internal technology up to speed.

Mullin says Charles IT provided a depth of knowledge, resources, skills, experience, and certifications he didn't have the budget to create internally. Dereck Jacques, Charles IT's account manager for ESC, essentially serves as the client's virtual chief information security officer (vCISO). He worked with the company to develop an IT roadmap that has helped its IT operations evolve smoothly and proactively.

"Dereck's talking about these cutting-edge things that are happening that can improve us," Mullin says. "Before I'm even aware that we have a problem, he's setting it out there, and we draw them on the road map."

As COO at ESC, Mullin supervises multiple operations, including corporate communications and human resources. Before ESC formed its relationship with Charles IT, Mullin considered IT one of the weakest operations at his company. "It wasn't the people," he said. "We just weren't able to do what we needed to do with what we had. IT is probably the thing I'm most proud of now."

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Charles IT's people skills were as important as its technical ones. The company's IT professionals formed relationships with those at ESC, easing any fears that the new services would make their jobs unnecessary. While many of Charles IT's clients don't have their own IT employees, the company's services can just as easily complement a midsized company's existing IT staff. "Working with Charles IT allowed us to take our inside people and move them closer to our end-use customers for the products we sell and let Charles IT take some of those corporate tasks," Mullin says.

Implementation

The Plan, the Pandemic, and the Perfect Timing

Environmental Systems began working with Charles IT in December 2018. The next year saw enormous progress in moving ESC from the lagging edge, in Mullin's terms, toward the front. "Probably within the first year, we got to about 80 percent," he says.

In January 2020, ESC arrived at a major destination on its roadmap by implementing Microsoft Office 365. The company's email, once managed by a server in a closet, was now in the cloud. And ESC had a nifty new tool for meetings: Microsoft Teams.

The timing was serendipitous. Just two months later, the COVID pandemic forced the company's employees to begin working remotely.

"You could not tell me at the end of 2019 that we would ever be able to do something like that," Mullin says. "The improvements we made in our infrastructure allowed us to actually go remote as an entire company and work from home because of Teams, because of the cloud-based mail server, because of all the capabilities we put servers in. I would have to say it was one of the critical elements of the success for our company."

> *"We had a great year in 2020, and we went remote seamlessly for the dumb luck of getting Office 365 rolled out in January of that year. So, we would not have been able to do it without Charles IT."*
>
> - Michael Mullin

Dec 2018	2019	Jan 2020	Mar 2020	2020 Onward
ESC's company email was managed by a physical server. The system failed while attempting to transfer the server to a third party.	*Charles IT Advances ESC's IT Maturity, reaching 80% of their goal within the first year.*	*Microsoft Office 365 is implemented. The company email is now on the cloud.*	*ESC has new IT infrastructure in place and can adapt swiftly when COVID forces employees to work remotely.*	*Significant project completions, such as implementing a full Meraki network stack and overhauling the VMware environment, equip ESC to move forward.*

Results

The Everyday and the Exceptional

Charles IT has helped ESC's everyday operations run much more smoothly. In the past six months, for example, Charles has logged 290 alert tickets for ESC. These mainly represent things breaking and Charles fixing them before users get into the office.

"They monitor all our systems 24 by 7," Mullin says. "So, if I have a server go down, they will know. Even at midnight, they will know, and they're able to assess how much impact that little thing that just happened would have on us, and they'd react appropriately.

"I would say our business continuity is dramatically improved," he says.

But Charles IT's impact has gone beyond the day-to-day. In addition to that first emergency email fix and the Office 365 migration, Charles has proactively managed the following significant projects for ESC:

1 Implemented a full Meraki network stack, bringing ESC's network up to date

2 Overhauled the company's VMware environment

3 Implemented multifactor authentication for improved security

4 Implemented a VoIP and 3CX phone system that helped greatly during the pandemic

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Another of Charles IT's specialties is compliance. With clients in fields as wide-ranging as financial services, healthcare, manufacturing, government and nonprofit, the company is ready to help them meet compliance needs such as CMMC, SOC 2, SEC and NIST CSF.

For a technology company such as ESC, a strong cybersecurity profile is a must when dealing with high-level customers such as the Federal Aviation Administration or international corporations. "We never would be able to have cleared those thresholds prior to working with Charles IT," Mullin says.

ESC's relationship with Charles IT has been transformative. "We shifted completely from a reactive, behind-the-curve mode of managing and operating," Mullin says. "We are right now in fully proactive mode."

His company has dramatically upped its game, he says. "It doesn't smell like a privately owned Connecticut company. It smells like something bigger."

CHARLES