

CASE STUDY

EXCEL ELECTRICAL



excelelectrical.com



Tim Hansen, Lead Controller



Approximately 25 Employees



Founded in 2002

BACKGROUND

Excel Electrical Technologies located in Kennesaw, Georgia, and Concord, North Carolina, is one of the Southeast's leading providers of pre-construction and construction electrical services. Since its inception in 2002, Excel has experienced tremendous growth and financial success. Boasting a talented team of professionals and extensive experience in multiple market segments, Excel Electrical continues to be recognized as a preferred construction services provider in its diverse geographic and service markets.



THE MAIN CHALLENGE

After spending a year moving its core business applications to the cloud, Excel Electrical's only remaining on-premises servers were the domain controller and file server. They ran into several issues during their migration with their current MSP, which left them hesitant to move the final pieces to complete their cloud transition.

Growing Frustrations

When Excel Electrical's small business MSP was acquired by a larger corporation, the quality of service declined and expenses increased. The MSP also lost staff, including those who had worked alongside Excel Electrical's Lead Controller Tim Hansen as he built the company's infrastructure from the ground up. Tim was concerned but held out hope that the new team could meet Excel Electrical's needs. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

The set monthly fee that Excel Electrical had been paying for its MSP's services was replaced by unpredictable bills and overbilling problems. For example, the company went from paying a consistent flat fee for anti-virus services to being charged when the MSP simply viewed virus alerts. Tim's only choice was to terminate the anti-virus services, along with several others, due to the addition of billable hours for trivial tasks that had previously been included in the standard monthly fee.

The problems continued during the company's cloud migration when their SAN ran out of space and crashed. The MSP was able to get it back up and running, but, unfortunately, Tim later discovered that as upgrades were performed and vCenters were added, the MSP had failed to clean up old data, meaning Excel Electrical was using 8TB of its SAN for 1TB of data. Despite building and maintaining the systems poorly, the MSP still billed Excel Electrical to unsuccessfully attempt to fix their own mistake.

According to Tim,

We paid them for years to build and maintain it. They were the ones who got it in that condition. I don't understand why when we moved our servers to the cloud, they didn't purge everything unnecessary. I thought that would all be a part of it if they were truly monitoring and maintaining the health of our network like they were supposed to be.

Problems Force a Decision

With the myriad of issues caused by the MSP acquisition, the forced remote work caused by the pandemic and the company's entire 6-plus-year-old hardware infrastructure requiring a refresh, Tim knew it was time for a change.

Already frustrated with the MSP, Tim began searching for an alternative provider after the SAN snafu during the migration, but he still needed to move the remaining domain controller and file server to the cloud. Their MSP proposed that Excel Electrical rent space in Azure so the servers could be moved to it. Adding to this already expensive proposition, Excel Electrical would need to purchase Microsoft Server user CALs for each employee and endpoint. Sticker-shocked and wary of the MSP's proposal, Tim went directly to Microsoft for input. He knew he needed a local provider close to their Georgia office so Microsoft recommended Cortavo by Aventis Systems, a Microsoft Gold Partner in Small and Mid-market Cloud Solutions.



SOLUTION

As a Microsoft Gold Partner well-versed in small business cloud migrations, Cortavo was able to propose an alternative solution: using Teams, SharePoint, and OneDrive to move Excel Electrical's existing file server to the cloud.

"After a couple of conversations, I felt pretty comfortable that Aventis would be an easy group to work with, and so far, that's been true; the team has been very accommodating," Tim said. "Looking at the proposals from my previous provider and Aventis, it was a night-and-day difference in price. It was a no-brainer."

According to Tim,

One of the things that attracted me to the Aventis proposal was that the way you are doing things was completely new to me and that you're bringing us more current technology, where a lot of small companies have a bad habit of having a single-purpose server where they still have to manage the backups on top of everything else; they're just doing the same thing over and over again. This, to me, seems like it's pushing us more into what computing will be in the future. I'm just a couple of years away from retirement, and while I'm not an IT guy, when I leave, I'd like the company to have a solid infrastructure that will serve them long-term.

While conducting the migration, Excel Electrical planned to move design software from their file server to a new environment, but this caused latency issues with Microsoft updating the files in a timely manner.

According to Tim,

Paul (Cortavo's Senior Microsoft Engineer) has put a lot of hours into trying to figure out what the issue was and ended up having to open a case with Microsoft with no success. So, we decided that Aventis would host some space in their cloud for that application to ensure performance. The issues were all things that, unless you had come across them before, you wouldn't anticipate.

Outcome

Cortavo's process of a gradual migration was seamless for the staff at Excel Electrical with zero disruption to their business operations.

Excel Electrical's network is now entirely cloud-based, eliminating weak signals and poor connectivity issues over a VPN for users on job sites.

With Cortavo, Tim has found a local partner he can trust to set the company up for future success. While most MSPs require long-term agreements and have limiting termination clauses, Cortavo was the rare exception. Here are the results in Tim's words:

When talking with Aventis, they were more flexible with us. After explaining our situation, I was concerned about being in a one-year contract, in case it didn't work, so we wouldn't be stuck paying with nothing in return like we had been with our previous MSP. Cortavo was willing to modify our agreement to our liking, which was really nice of them. It was refreshing to not be in a one-sided agreement.

The #1 thing that led me to choose Aventis was that it wasn't the same old process. It was exposing us to newer technology ideas and the timing was just right because we were looking for that type of solution to break us out of what we've always done.

They proposed exactly what we were looking for in a simpler and fairer, less expensive, approach than what we would have had with our other provider. I would have never, under any circumstance, gone through our previous provider again since we had so many issues. I would have never realized it was even a possibility to do it the way we're doing it now.

A lot of companies are buying space in Azure and moving their servers because it's what they think they have to do, but it doesn't seem like a good fit financially for small businesses. Aventis' proposal made the decision easy because it made sense to Excel Electrical, and it didn't feel like we were buying a Cadillac with all these extras that were unnecessary for us.

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