

Renewable Energy Contractor Finds Efficiencies and Exceptional Support in the Cloud

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Renewable energy contractors are known for their cutting edge products and services and their innovative thinking often spills into the way they operate and manage their businesses. Joe Thielen, IT Director for solar power solutions provider, Real Goods Solar in Louisville, CO shared why his company decided on cloud computing and how that decision has impacted their business.

The Situation

Joe Thielen was skeptical about nearly every ERP solution and software deployment option available - and rightly so. Having installed a number of ERP solutions in other companies where he has worked, he has seen many bad options featuring even worse support. Getting hired at Real Goods Solar just a few days after Viewpoint V6 Software® with Cloud computing was purchased, he was pleased with the features and benefits of the software delivered via the Cloud and equally pleased with Viewpoint’s support right from the beginning of implementation.

Cost Savings in the Cloud

“I think one of the most difficult tasks an IT manager faces is to quantify the cost associated with an application,” Thielen declared. “How much does it really cost to host a user on the system?” As an IT manager who has to answer questions related to application costs regularly, he is pleased that the Cloud provides a simple answer. “If you go into the Cloud, questions about cost disappear. You know exactly how much it costs per person/per month to host a user. No funny math. No estimating.” He added, “From a budgetary standpoint, you have a very predictable cost. No surprises three years down the road and if you expand, you just add more licenses.”

As a growing contractor, Thielen added one more comment to the cost advantages of Cloud computing. “In the event that we purchase a company or add a number of new employees, my CEO is naturally going to ask, ‘How much is it going to cost me to add these users.’ I can tell my CEO exactly what it’s going to cost.” That makes everyone happy.

From a logistical standpoint, the Cloud delivers new advantages to Real Goods Solar as well. “We didn’t have a data center set-up here or even the proper infrastructure, so we would have had to co-locate our servers at a secondary

service. Having the option to host our Viewpoint software in the Cloud was perfect for our organization.” He added, “You have coverage you don’t have to manage – monitoring, set-up, etc. There are no worries about getting paged at 2 a.m. to deal with issues and you get to focus on process, function, enhancements, and customization – that’s definitely the biggest advantage.”

Powerful Support

As mentioned earlier, Thielen has had a great deal of experience dealing with software companies and their respective support teams – he’s worked with many of the big players. Through those experiences, he learned that many prominent providers frankly offered customers terrible support: Example – With one major ERP provider, just entering a trouble ticket could take upwards of an hour. Refreshingly, he found the opposite experience with Viewpoint support. He explained, “With Viewpoint, I can put in a ticket, or call, and get a response right away, I get called back and we chat through issues.” He continued, “There’s always a follow-up and a pursuit to resolve the issue and we’ve asked for some crazy stuff!”

Thielen is pleased that Viewpoint’s support team is uniquely empowered to take ownership of a problem or an issue. He shared a specific example. “One day I needed to add custom fields for the user forms. I was able to set up an appointment and a helpful support person took the time to walk me through the process step by step. That is absolutely unheard of in any industry from a support standpoint.”

When it came to the actual Cloud implementation process – a difficult endeavor for any IT manager, Thielen again found unparalleled assistance from Viewpoint’s support team. “When implementing the Cloud, Support was able to work through all the road bumps and find answers to our problems. If the Viewpoint support person didn’t have an answer they’d find someone who did.” He concluded, “If I had to give a grade, I would give Viewpoint an A.”

The Future

Real Goods Solar is maximizing the “anytime, anywhere” aspect of Cloud computing and plans to take it even further as they grow and expand. Over 50% of the staff of Real Goods Solar is mobile. Sales people, project managers and job crews are always in remote locations and that continues to grow. Thielen stated with enthusiasm, “We’re pushing for 100% of our company to be in the Cloud so that our teams at any of our office or project locations - East Coast, West Coast and Colorado can access the software anytime it’s needed.”

For more information on how effective implementing Viewpoint V6 Software can be for your business and bottom line, call 800.333.3197 or visit viewpointcs.com.

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