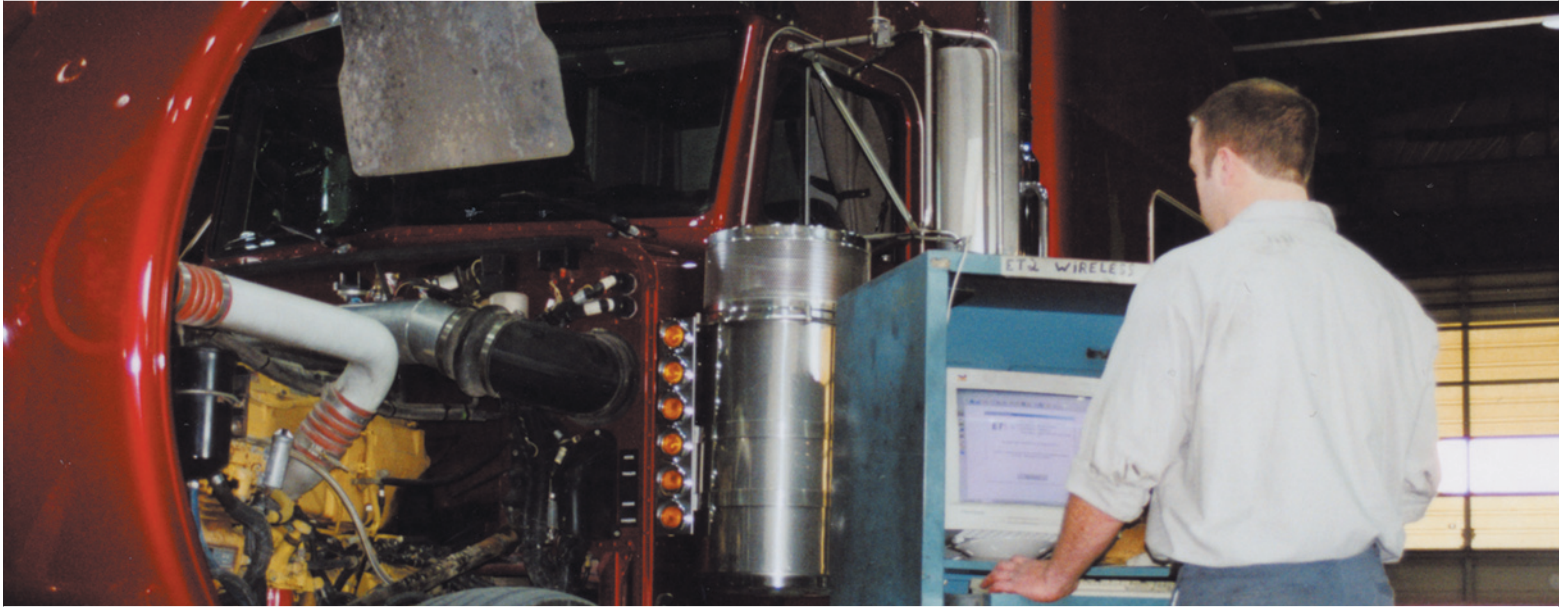


FABICKTRACTOR

Technology “to ever serve customers better”



CLIENT SUCCESS STORY



ST. LOUIS-BASED FABICK TRACTOR MOBILIZES SALES FORCE, CONNECTS REMOTE LOCATIONS TO REALIZE DRAMATIC SAVINGS IN TIME AND MONEY

In 1917, when John Fabick formed the Cat dealership that bears his name, he adopted as the company credo “to ever serve our customers better.” Little did he imagine the role technology would come to play in his earthmoving and heavy equipment business. But today, Fabick Tractor’s focus on technology solutions to improve communications is critical to the company credo. Working with technology partner Advanced System Designs (ASD), Fabick has found cost-efficient ways to mobilize its sales force and connect remote locations—implementing virtual private network and wireless solutions for improved customer service and dramatic savings in time and costs.

BRINGING MOBILE USERS ONLINE

Like most sales organizations, Fabick employs a mobile sales force, as well as service technicians who work primarily from their vehicles. These two groups come to the office rarely, relying on laptops and home computers. That meant connecting to the network via a dial-up remote access server (which was slow and costly), having others search for information, or making a special trip to the office just to check things like e-mail. The process was inefficient—employees wasted time waiting for information instead of serving a customer or making a sale.

Connecting mobile employees more efficiently was a problem Dan Underwood, Fabick’s chief information officer, wanted to solve. He turned to ASD for solutions. After installing a new firewall, ASD set up a virtual private network (VPN), which creates a secure encrypted tunnel connection to Fabick’s network—eliminating the slow, often costly long-distance dial-up connection. Mobile employees need only an Internet connection and password to access e-mail and other network resources. VPN is not only faster, but adding users is as easy as well.

“It’s just like being in the main office,” Underwood says. “It saves our salespeople time, and in our business, time is money.”

QUICKLY CONNECTING REMOTE LOCATIONS

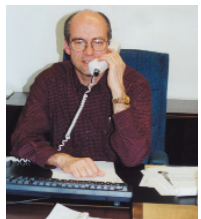
VPN works for more than just mobile employees, though. It can also connect branch stores and remote locations—and shorten the implementation schedule for new facilities. Fabick has over 400 employees working in 12 locations. With VPN, they can all access Fabick’s main network quickly and securely. And when Fabick acquired another dealership and added three locations, the company had them online in days.

“In the past, we had to rely on the phone company to get a lease line set up, and we had to install routers and hubs. The whole process could take 10-30 days,” Underwood explains. “With VPN, we were communicating with the new stores within two days. There’s no waiting—access is secure and immediate.”

DRAMATICALLY IMPROVING SPEED, RELIABILITY, AND COSTS

But speed of implementation isn’t the only benefit Fabick has seen as a result of VPN. Connection speeds are faster; reliability is enhanced; and telecommunication costs have been reduced dramatically.

“The time savings are obvious, but there are significant cost savings as well,” Underwood says. “We used to pay \$400 a month for our lease line that connected us to the Internet at 64K. To upgrade that line to a faster speed would have cost over \$1,000 a month. With VPN, we have a 784K connection and pay only \$200 a month—that’s over 10 times the speed at half the cost. And I think the cost-savings might be more dramatic for other Cat dealers or companies that have even more stores spread out over an even larger territory.”



Fabick CIO Dan Underwood says ASD is helping the dealership use technology “to make a big impact on business—productivity, profitability, and customer satisfaction.”

EXTENDING THE NETWORK TO THE SHOP FLOOR—WITHOUT WIRES

Despite the success of VPN, there were still a few users at Fabick with an information access problem. The dealership operates several truck engine facilities, where technicians literally plug their laptops into engines to make updates and check specifications. At the same time, they often need to order parts or look up service data. But because these engine facilities are physically separated from the main office, technicians had to leave their laptops, head into the office, find an open computer, and look up information there.

"It wasted time and effort," Underwood explains. "So we looked into wiring these facilities to the main office, and it just wasn't feasible. It was hard to justify the expense of trenching and blasting through concrete."

Underwood again turned to ASD, and the company implemented a wireless solution that basically extends the network to the shop floor without the need for cables or wires. Now technicians use laptops contained in a cabinet with a wireless device on the top. They just roll the cabinets up to the truck and can access all the information they need without ever leaving the area. That translates into faster decision-making and improved customer service. And like VPN, it allows for quicker implementation and greater flexibility.

SERVER SOLUTIONS SAVE FABICK TIME, MONEY, AND HASSLE

Fabick and ASD began their relationship years ago, after the dealership purchased an IBM AS/400 (now an iSeries) server. Before, Fabick ran productivity, business, and Cat applications from separate servers, a management-intensive process. The iSeries lets Fabick consolidate applications—protecting the initial investment and simplifying management.

Investment protection

Fabick purchased its iSeries server in 1988 and is still running on an iSeries machine today. That's because the server is "scalable"—as Fabick has grown over the years, the server has grown with it. And because computer equipment is an asset Fabick can write off, updating the same physical asset instead of buying a new one is a cost-savings.

"From the day we installed the iSeries until now, our business has grown considerably, but we haven't had to change the way our base applications are run," Underwood explains. "We're protecting our investment."

Simple management

Consolidating individual servers onto the iSeries also simplified management for Fabick. Instead of managing eight servers, the dealership manages one. Fewer employees and dollars are required to keep it up and running. Backups and updates are easier, too.

One example involves Caterpillar's Service Information System (SIS), a complex parts data program that Fabick installed on an individual server within the iSeries. Cat sends dealers changes to SIS each month—up to 70 CDs with new data. Dealers can choose to shut their networks down for a lengthy period to install the updates or not load them at all. Neither alternative is attractive. But Fabick's solution eliminates both problems. The dealership can load the updates without disrupting other applications and offer current data to customers.

"When a customer calls with a question, our employees can access up-to-date information right away," Underwood says. "That means quicker turnaround and happier customers."

Thin-client technology

Another server solution that's working well for Fabick is the switch to "thin-client" technology. A thin client is a PC network where all applications and software are installed on one server, instead of on individual PCs (fat clients). Users access applications they need through a Web browser, 5250 emulation, or Citrix client. Over 60 percent of Fabick employees work on thin-client systems.

"Fat clients are management nightmares," Underwood says. "Thin clients allow us to centrally manage our entire PC network from our main office, so we don't need technical people at each location. If we get a new version of Microsoft Word, we only have to load it once—if something isn't working, we only have to fix it once. Another benefit is that employees can access e-mail from any desktop. The savings in time and money are huge."

INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY FOR LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS AND BENEFITS

Finding one technology company able to integrate a range of solutions has been important to Fabick, Underwood says, because it saves the dealership time and money in the long run. Establishing a long-term relationship with a partner he trusts is another benefit.

"I've worked with some of ASD's people for 10 years. I trust their product and business knowledge, and I like the fact that they care enough to answer questions, let me know about new products, or simply follow up on things. As business problems crop up, I always turn to ASD for their recommendations. In fact, in the last five years, there hasn't been a project ASD hasn't been involved with at Fabick. Together we're using technology to make a big impact on business—productivity, profitability, and customer satisfaction."

Technology spotlight

- > **IBM iSeries.** The iSeries is Fabick's core business application server, supporting accounting, parts ordering, inventory, used equipment, and service applications; Lotus Notes and Domino-based mail and workflow applications; file and print services; and Caterpillar-based support applications. ASD helped Fabick consolidate Windows NT servers to the Integrated xSeries adapter for iSeries, combining the performance of Intel-based servers with the management and ease of operation of the iSeries.
- > **IBM Network Stations.** This thin-client technology allows Fabick to move applications to the iSeries server, control and manage one environment, and enable users the application access they need through a web browser, 5250 emulation, or Citrix client.
- > **Check Point FireWall-1 and VPN-1.** FireWall1, a gateway firewall solution, uses Stateful Inspection technology to control Internet access in and out of the network. It also provides user authentication, network address translation, content security, ease of management, and complete logging. VPN-1, with SecuRemote, gives remote users access to the network. VPN tunnels between Fabick's main location and remote offices were built using Check Point VPN-1, lowering costs and increasing bandwidth.
- > **Nokia IP Security Solutions.** The new Nokia IP-530 security appliance hosts the Check Point firewall and VPN, giving Fabick higher throughput and greater reliability in a secure, easy-to-install and manage, firewall/VPN solution. Nokia IP Security Solutions offer hardened IPSO OS, comprehensive routing, multiple network interfaces, Voyager Web configuration, and are pre-loaded with Check Point software.
- > **80211b Wireless LAN.** ASD helped Fabick implement a wireless local area network, allowing technicians in a remote building to access parts and service applications on the iSeries from their work centers.



John Fabick Tractor Company, founded in 1917, is one of the nation's oldest, largest, and most experienced Caterpillar dealers. Based in St. Louis, Fabick sells and services construction and agricultural equipment to customers in 73 counties in Missouri and southern Illinois and is a major supplier of pipeline equipment worldwide.



A Check Point and IBM Premier Business Partner, ASD builds long-term client relationships by focusing on business needs and applying integrated technology solutions that deliver results. Areas of expertise include availability, business intelligence, messaging, networking, security, servers, Web development, and wireless. For more information:

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