

Collins Computing Customer Solution Case Study



Customer: Grace Community Church

Web Site: www.gracechurch.org

Customer Size: 200 employees

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Non-profit - Membership organizations

Customer Profile

Grace Community Church is a non-denominational church with nearly 7,000 members. It is based in Sun Valley, California.

Partner

Collins Computing

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Collins Computing is the largest Microsoft Dynamics Gold Certified Partner in Southern California. Based in Mission Viejo, Collins Computing helps organizations sharpen their competitive edge through the integration of Microsoft Dynamics products – including Dynamics GP, Dynamics AX, and Dynamics CRM – into their business and IT systems.

Software and Services

- Collins Computing Congregation Management System
- Microsoft Dynamics CRM 4.0
- Microsoft Office Outlook
- Windows Server
- Active Directory Domain Services

Church Improves Operations with Solution to Manage Member and Financial Information

“We’re now able to make more and better decisions based on information that, in the past, was very difficult to pull to the surface.”

Erin Dibble, Director of IT, Grace Community Church

Grace Community Church has built a strong faith community over five decades. To better serve its nearly 7,000 parishioners, the church installed Microsoft CRM software and the CMS (Congregation Management System), a CRM solution from Collins Computing. The new system helps Grace Community Church staff better understand their membership and financial activities, which is improving outreach efforts.

Business Needs

Grace Community Church is a large, non-denominational institution based in Sun Valley, California. Founded in 1956, Grace Church today has about 7,000 members and a staff of 200 employees. In addition to its regular worship services, Grace Church operates an array of ministries, outreach programs, fellowship groups, conferences, and educational activities.

Through its years of growth, Grace Community Church installed different technologies to help run operations. As the church continued to grow in both members and staff, however, it became clear that some of its core technologies were no longer adequate for the demands of the daily operations.

“As an example, for years we had been running a Microsoft Access 97 database with a number of custom add-ons. The database was not that easy for our employees to use, and the IT staff spent a lot of time performing basic tasks like producing reports,” says Erin Dibble, Director of IT for Grace Community Church. “We also had information scattered through other software applications, like Outlook folders, a Microsoft SQL Server database, and a Web site built using Microsoft .NET Framework technologies. The software was not well integrated, making it hard to access information easily.”

By 2006, senior church employees realized how many problems were



created by having many different 'islands of data.' "Accessing financial information or locating specific records about members was time-consuming and labor-intensive," Dibble says. "The time invested in working with reports took away from other projects. It was also difficult to create and understand reports—we had more than 100 different reports, and it was hard to glean meaningful information from them. We also had concerns about security of sensitive information. Basically, our technology was a hindrance in effectively ministering to our church members."

Solution

Grace Community Church decided to overhaul the system that manages its membership and financial information by implementing Microsoft® CRM—part of the Microsoft Dynamics family of business solutions—along with customized CRM features developed by Collins Computing.

"After working with a trial copy of CRM, we realized it could help us unite membership and financial information into a single, expandable system that would not put us in the kind of box that other church membership applications can create," says Dibble. "Microsoft recommended that we work with Collins Computing on the implementation. Collins is very professional and knowledgeable about the CRM product. They understood our needs and made very good recommendations based on their experience."

A key part of the project was the Collins' Congregation Management System (CMS), which runs on top of Microsoft CRM. The CMS system works with

Microsoft CRM to give faith-based organizations additional tools for viewing detailed data on members, for managing financial information such as donations, and for performing activities such as event management and facilities scheduling. The CMS system maximizes the functions of Microsoft CRM to help make key metrics visible so church staff can run the organization and communicate with members more effectively.

Working with Collins, the IT department at Grace Church started on its implementation of Microsoft CRM with the Collins' CMS in March 2009. The deployment was finished in August 2009. Most employees are on the system. Most use custom tabs within Microsoft Office Outlook to access CRM-based information. To enhance security, Grace Church uses the Active Directory Domain Services in Windows Server to control access to sensitive financial information.

Benefits

Installing Microsoft CRM with the Collins' Congregation Management System has delivered significant benefits to Grace Church. Church employees have greater visibility into important information about members and financial data such as donations. The system delivers more usable data that leads to better insights, while the centralized system and integration with Active Directory allows the IT department to enhance security. The system also lets Grace Church plan and conduct outreach efforts more efficiently and cost-effectively than it could in the past.

Greater visibility into data. The centralization of information in Microsoft CRM and the tools provided by the Collins' CMS help Grace Church employees locate more data efficiently and quickly. "This makes it much easier to uncover patterns in donations and member involvement in church activities," says Dibble. "It also makes it much easier to produce clear reports, and has helped us eliminate dozens of the old reports that we had to use in the past."

More usable – and more secure – information. Gaining greater access to more information also results in more usable information. "We're now able to make more and better decisions based on information that, in the past, was very difficult to pull to the surface. It gives our church leadership more insights into the kinds of activities that can most benefit our members," Dibble says. She adds that the church now has greater security for sensitive membership and financial information.

Increased planning ability. With the easier access to rich, usable information, Grace Church employees have an easier time making long-range plans, and are also evaluating the creation of electronic communications that can help reduce or eliminate the expense and logistics related to paper-based processes. "For example, it will be easier and less expensive, than in the past, to identify and reach out to parents with elementary school children to announce events for kids in that age bracket," Dibble says. "The Collins' solution is like opening the blinds so we can really see what we have to work with."

