

IBF Consulting Meets Complex Customer Needs with Simple Solution

IBF Consulting, an IT consulting firm serving small businesses in the New York City metro area, has built its business around a core of financial services, political campaigns and political consulting customers. For these customers, IBF Consulting serves as an outsourced IT department, handling a large range of IT services including:

- Assessment services
- Network design and implementation
- Migration and consolidation services
- Security design and implementation
- Messaging services
- Support services
- Vendor / product management
- Web design
- Relocation services

Despite having an average of 10 to 25 employees, IBF Consulting's customers – all part of highly regulated industries – require a robust and secure email system that can support compliance technologies and other auditing and backup procedures. As the leading business email system, Microsoft Exchange is the obvious choice for these businesses, despite the inherent cost and complexities the server software poses.

Through serving the small business market, IBF Consulting has learned that innovation and creativity are key in being able to provide customers with the advanced technology they need, at a price point they can afford.

"Our customers have big IT requirements and small budgets," said Ian Fischer, President of IBF Consulting. "Our mission is to work within those parameters without ever cheating them on the functionality side.



For email, this meant finding a way to deliver a highly complex and expensive technology in a simple and affordable manner."

For 10 to 25 users, building out an entire Microsoft Exchange 2007 server environment is simply not cost effective. The upfront costs alone include tens of thousands of dollars in multiple servers and expensive software licenses, not to mention the additional costs that come with BlackBerry® Enterprise Servers and licenses. Further, because of the prohibitive cost of the initial hardware, it's nearly impossible to provide backup hardware for redundancy in the case of failures. For IBF Consulting, this meant finding a way to give its customers the complex technology while avoiding the high costs of hardware and software licensing.

The clear solution was offering a hosted Microsoft Exchange 2007 solution. Through a hosted service, IBF Consulting's customers would simply pay a per-month per-user fee, be able to easily and affordably add services such as BlackBerry, SharePoint and Exchange ActiveSync, and wouldn't have to worry about on-premise hardware failures. For IBF Consulting, this solution led to another challenge: what is the best way to go about adding hosted services to our product set?

Building its own hosted Microsoft Exchange 2007 infrastructure environment was out of the question. While the company has a large customer base, it didn't have the capacity to build out the multiple servers, redundancy capabilities and back-up hardware necessary to provide a truly robust hosted Microsoft Exchange 2007 infrastructure. That's when the company began looking for a partner.

In searching for a partner, IBF Consulting had a list of must-haves: an easy-to-use and highly functional control panel, a knowledgeable and always-available support team, and the ability to sign up customers instantly. Fischer spearheaded the search for a partner and ultimately decided that Intermedia was the best partner for his business.

“Intermedia’s HostPilot® empowers me to do essentially everything without having to call and deal with tech support or long hold times,” said Fischer. “It’s nice that I can get up and running within minutes on the web and I appreciate that Intermedia’s tech support is extremely helpful and always available.”

Once he decided to partner with Intermedia, Fischer needed to decide which partnership structure would work best for his business. Intermedia offers a few different partnership options:

- Private Labeled – designed to leverage the name and customer loyalty of the partner’s brand.
- Co-branded – designed to leverage Intermedia as a world-leader in messaging and collaboration SaaS services and the partner’s brand as a trusted advisor to its customers.
- Affiliate – Designed to keep partner involvement at a minimum while still providing compensation for signing the customer up with Intermedia’s services.

After reviewing the different partnership options, Fischer decided that the Affiliate program was the best model for IBF Consulting. The company does not sell services under its own brand, as its model traditionally revolves around partnering with VARs to sell hardware. Intermedia’s Affiliate program allows IBF Consulting to leverage that same model with a hosted service partner, without dealing with the additional customer management or cash flow issues. For Fischer, the point of finding a hosted Exchange partner was not to have another product to manage, or even to generate another source of revenue, but rather to provide the best solution for his customers’ email needs. He found that referring customers to Intermedia’s hosted Exchange 2007 offering provides this solution.

Since becoming an Intermedia Affiliate partner, IBF Consulting has set up many of its customers on the Intermedia hosted Exchange 2007 platform, with good results. Customers are happy with the robust functionality and affordable monthly per-user fees, and IBF Consulting makes a commission from Intermedia for every customer they refer, in addition to the service hours they are paid for setting up and managing their customers’ accounts.

“In the end, we really just needed a simple means of meeting our customers’ demands for a robust and complex email system at a cost they can afford,” said Fischer. “Intermedia’s Affiliate program gave us what we needed – a solution to this problem, without any new product or pricing management hassles. It was a good choice for the business.”



INTERMEDIA

Intermedia is the worldwide leader in business email solutions for small to midsized businesses. Years of experience and financial stability, along with high quality service, have made Intermedia a trusted partner to tens of thousands of SMBs worldwide.

To learn more, visit www.intermedia.net, or call 1-800-379-7729.

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