

Infra-Metals Constructs a Strong Technology Solution



CLIENT: Infra-Metals Co.

THE CHALLENGE:

Keeping pace with technology while experiencing tremendous growth

THE SOLUTION:

- CompuData Network Integration & Internet Security Services
- AT&T Voice/Data
- Netilla Security Platform

JOHN LUSDYK, PRESIDENT, SOUTHERN REGION:

"As we continue to grow our business, expand our locations and stay ahead of the technology curve, we will continue to turn to CompuData to help us improve our efficiency and increase our competitive edge."

Infra-Metals Co. is one of the largest structural steel service centers in the United States. As a subsidiary of a leading international company, Infra-Metals has a strong commitment to steel



distribution and processing in New England, the Mid-Atlantic, the Midwest and Florida.

The network of Infra-Metals Structural Steel Service Centers has provided material for hundreds of jobs in the United States and Canada. From smaller projects such as an addition to the White House to jobs as large as the Wachovia Center in Philadelphia and the Olympic Stadium in Atlanta.

Founded in 1990, Infra-Metals has experienced tremendous growth. The company has gone from a startup in 1990 to a \$450 million business in only 15 years.

In the early 1990s, the company used an industry-specific UNIX business software solution, had a dedicated line between 15 dumb terminals in Langhorne, Pa. and five in Baltimore, Md. and could not financially justify hiring an IT person to manage its technology and telecommunications systems. The company used a handful of third-party service providers to handle various aspects of its tech-

nology infrastructure, but no one firm had a strong expertise in all the areas and when a problem arose, the blame was always passed on to another vendor.

Building a Solid Relationship

In 1996, Infra-Metals had a technical issue and a friendly competitor recommended that it contact CompuData. "CompuData quickly responded, provided us with a solution and our relationship evolved from there," explained John Lusdyk, president of Southern Region for Infra-Metals. "CompuData soon became our 'middle man' handling all of our voice and data requirements."

Managing the company's Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia locations, Lusdyk was focused on continually trying to better manage its mission-critical data with a more integrated solution for those three offices. CompuData worked with Infra-Metals' Mid-Atlantic region to understand its needs and strategize on its future technology requirements and moved Infra-Metals from a dumb-terminal environment to a wide area network with high-speed remote access capabilities running on PCs. CompuData also provides technology services for other Infra-Metals locations.

Constructing an Integrated Solution

It is critical that companies today have computer and telephone systems that are up-to-date and will be able to meet future requirements, but it is also essential that these systems, including voice, Internet and data technologies, are able to talk to each other. CompuData has set up a single, user-friendly environment for Infra-Metals that is scalable to handle the company's future expansion needs. "Having one company to go to for all of our technical needs saves us significant time and frustration," said Lusdyk.



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As an Authorized AT&T Agent, CompuData now handles all of Infra-Metals telecommunications contracts. "They have been very aggressive in getting us the best rates possible and are always ahead of the game – negotiating new, better contracts even before our old ones are up. CompuData has cut our long-distance costs by 50 percent through their negotiation efforts with AT&T."

"We opened our Virginia location in 2002 and because we had a solid IT and telecom infrastructure in place, it was a smooth transition, enabling our employees to easily communicate between offices," added Lusdyk. CompuData was able to provide Infra-Metals with the capability to interconnect its geographically dispersed offices with a secure virtual private network over a high-speed T1 line.

With the mid-Atlantic offices interconnected, Infra-Metals employees can easily collaborate on projects through a secure connection and even print or fax documents from their system in one office to a machine in one of the other locations.

Staying Connected on the Road

In addition to designing, implementing and managing Infra-Metals voice and data infrastructure and providing systems and hardware support, CompuData has also worked with Infra-Metals to ensure secure access for its mobile users.

Infra-Metals has numerous outside sales personnel, many traveling executives, as well as a few employees working from their homes. Remote access was a critical component of its IT solution. CompuData recommended the Netilla security platform, which provides remote access over the Internet to applications, files and data for branch offices, telecommuters, mobile employees, as well as partners, customers or even suppliers. Preserving Infra-Metals existing UNIX platform, Netilla securely allows any application, file or data to

be delivered to any standard web browser. For a road warrior, like Lusdyk, and his colleagues, it increases their productivity, improves customer service and provides business-to-business collaboration from anywhere in the world.

Raising the Bar

In addition to providing Infra-Metals with mission-critical support over the past 10 years, adapting its computer and telecommunications infrastructure as its business has expanded, providing support for all of its PCs and servers, CompuData has also reduced the downtime of the company's network to virtually nil, saving Infra-Metals the financial expense of hiring an IT manager or potentially a team of IT people to manage its computer and telecommunications systems in-house.

"We have a commitment to stay on the cutting-edge of technology," explained Lusdyk. "Working with CompuData for 10 years, they have been there for the onslaught of the Internet and e-mail and helped us leverage these technologies in our business. At every point along the way, CompuData has provided us with good, sound advice, helping us not only address current issues, but strategize for the future."

"CompuData provides super customer service," said Lusdyk. "We can call them anytime, day or night, and we are able to get a hold of someone who can address our questions."

Infra-Metals has plans to switch to a Windows environment in the near future and implement a back office solution based on pending industry-standardized barcoding at steel mills. "As we continue to grow our business, expand our locations and stay ahead of the technology curve, we will continue to turn to CompuData to help us improve our efficiency and increase our competitive edge," added Lusdyk.