

SOLUTIONS FOR GROWING COMPANIES

Applied Policy Research triples growth with right technology

Appplied Policy Research, Inc. (APR) provides a highly niched service to American higher education institutions. It offers analytic support to college and university administrations to assist with pricing, price position in the market, and structuring effective financial aid programs, with a particular focus on the management of net tuition revenue.

Ten years ago, APR was a three-person company that served five clients. Its founder, William Hall, PhD, spent much of his time traveling to and from campuses, collecting data on a floppy disk and delivering the analysis when results were completed.

Kirk Hoagland, CEO of Clientek, which officed next to APR, challenged Hall that there had to be a better way for him to conduct business if he was ever going to grow beyond five clients. He believed that APR could grow by a factor of three with the application of good technology, recalls Hall.

Four years later, APR was serving 15 clients and had added new staff. Today, the company is celebrating a 20 year anniversary, has a staff of 10, and has broadened its level of service to its clients. Hall no longer has to travel as much and has added senior level consulting personnel so that he can focus less on those responsibilities and more on his vision for the company.

"Growing from five-to-15 clients over

THE PROBLEM

APPLIED POLICY RESEARCH, INC. had difficulty acquiring data and delivering analytic results to clients distant from its home base in Minneapolis.

THE SOLUTION

CLIENTEK provided an Internet-based data acquisition and reporting mechanism that was both secure and efficient. This provided Applied Policy Research the ability to realistically focus on a national presence because use of the Internet eliminated the distance between the company and its clients.

the course of three years clearly demonstrates the power of Kirk's argument," notes Hall. "That was the largest run up of growth in the company history. We've also been able to dramatically expand the dimensions of our contract relationships. Our clients are outsourcing more and more of their analytic research to us now."

Since 1992, Clientek has been helping businesses apply software and information technology applications to spur new growth. Through the years, it has developed a successful approach to IT and software projects that involves frequent and interactive communication with clients to deliver the right solutions.

Clientek created a secure and highly interactive Internet exchange system

that provided APR's clients a means for them to deliver their sensitive data whole and intact to APR. They also provided a personalized delivery system for APR to send its confidential analysis results to clients via the Internet. This dramatically reduced the need for Hall to travel to and from client facilities, and freed his time to focus on expanding APR's services.

"Most importantly, they relieved me of any concerns about the scalability of our work, whether it is taking on more clients or taking in and maintaining larger volumes of data coming at us with greater frequency," says Hall. "That was a key element for me."

Hoagland schedules regular meetings with Hall to review his systems and performance. Clientek also provides a technical person weekly to monitor APR's system onsite, and perform patches and upgrades as needed.

"Because they've monitored the performance of our internal and external system continuously since we began our relationship with them, there has been an uninterrupted outsourcing of the basic support of our network. It has been extremely cost effective for us," notes Hall.

Clientek has been developing and perfecting its customer-service process over the years, says Hoagland. The company delivers small increments of functionality and results throughout a project to



Bill Hall (left) and Kirk Hoaglund

effectively and economically realize the end results correctly – one piece at a time. Clientek manages costs by providing a gross estimate up front, allowing for refinements along the way if new requirements are identified jointly by Clientek and the customer.

The process avoids common problems that can arise when software and IT projects get dragged out over long periods of time and end up costing far more than a client expects, or end up having to be scrapped all together because they are ineffective.

“With our process, clients develop a trust level that we are approaching their desired outcome and they are intimately involved with each decision,” says Hoaglund. “If something unexpected happens or a new requirement is identified, we work together and decide what to do about it. Constant interaction coupled with an accurate initial estimate is what keeps these projects working, and it has clearly worked for APR for over a decade.”

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— **BILL HALL,**
founder of Applied Policy Research.

Hall says APR is now in a position where it can double its consulting work and services without having to undergo a new revolution in technology.

“There has not been a single decision made with Clientek’s advice with regard to technology that we regret, or any that we had to back away from,” says Hall.

“What they’ve done is left me at peace with technology for all that time.”

Applied Policy Research, Inc.
Suite 210, 1313 Fifth Street, S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55414
Contact: William Hall, PhD, founder
612-617-0094 • 612-331-7500 (fax)
bball@apr-net.com
www.apr-net.com

Clientek
Suite 314, 212 2nd Street, S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55414
Contact: Kirk Hoaglund, managing partner
and CEO
612-379-1440 • 612-379-1450 (fax)
kirk.hoaglund@clientek.com
www.clientek.com

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