

Organically Grown Company, Inc.



EasyStreet Helps Large Food Wholesaler Achieve Sustainable IT Infrastructure

Customer: Organically Grown Company, Inc.

- Headquartered in Eugene, Oregon, with branches in Clackamas, Oregon and Kent, Washington.
- Wholesale distributor of organic vegetables, fruits and herbs to natural and fine-food retailers, supermarket chains, restaurants, processors and home-delivery enterprises.
- Employs 136 people. Owned by employees and growers. Strong culture of sustainable business practices.
- IT includes accounting, inventory management, scheduling, shipping and receiving, sales, purchasing and email.

Challenge:

- Dramatic company growth impacting IT resources, including systems, facilities and staffing. Management team required to identify where to invest most effectively.

Solution:

- Outsource major portions of IT infrastructure to EasyStreet Online Services, Inc.



BRINGING SUSTAINABILITY TO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Organically Grown Company, Inc., is the largest wholesaler of organic produce in the Pacific Northwest. And, as such, the Eugene, Oregon, company places considerable importance on sustainability and being “green.” Now, with EasyStreet® Online Services, Inc., serving as its managed services provider (MSP), Organically Grown has also brought its technology infrastructure into the realm of its other sustainable business behaviors.

“Our mission statement is to promote health through organic agriculture and to practice sustainability,” says Waylon Spoden, Organically Grown’s IT manager. “I’m really happy now to have a role in our mission statement because EasyStreet and its green power has brought sustainability to our IT structure.”

“Green” and “sustainability” are terms that don’t usually appear in the same sentence with “IT,” and that’s why Spoden is happy. It’s also a key reason why Organically Grown — after evaluating several potential IT outsourcing

vendors — selected EasyStreet. The Beaverton-based MSP buys a significant part of its power through Portland General Electric’s renewable-power programs, including PGE Clean Wind and PGE Renewable Future.

“We realize we’re just one link in the sustainability chain,” Spoden says. “We’re a distributor — there are many farms behind us and retailers in front of us — and now even our IT is part of the chain. EasyStreet is way ahead of the green game in that regard. They’re a partner who fits well with us.”

But utilizing green power is mostly a fortuitous byproduct of doing business with EasyStreet. Organically Grown’s other IT issues that prompted the decision to outsource were serious enough to put the wholesaler’s technology systems and business operations at risk before EasyStreet came on the scene.

FACING GROWTH’S CHALLENGES

Organically Grown was founded in 1982 by organic farmers. Today it still purchases over 90 percent of its

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vegetables, fruits and herbs directly from growers — 35 percent of them in Oregon, Washington, and Vancouver, BC, and the rest outside the region — and then sells the produce to natural food retailers, supermarket chains, restaurants, home-delivery companies, processors, food-buying clubs and other outlets throughout the region.

With the dramatic growth in natural foods in recent years, Organically Grown has flourished. Its warehouses and inventory have expanded exponentially, its logistics have become increasingly complex and its workforce has grown to more than 130 employees. All of this growth understandably has put pressure on internal processes and controls as well as on hardware and software systems throughout the company.

“Up until two years ago, IT here was managed by the CFO,” Spoden explains. “She depended on vendors who were not necessarily even managing our servers. At that time, we had four separate facilities, and the situation was, ‘The server broke. Can you come and fix it? Okay.’” But the surge of growth and increasing demands on Organically Grown’s systems and facilities had brought its IT infrastructure close to a breaking point.

The company’s first remedy was to move Spoden from part-time to full-time to handle IT. “We continued working with the same vendors, but were no longer happy with the level of service,” he says. “They weren’t proactive in their approach. They allowed downtime to go on too long. We didn’t have a Service Level Agreement with them and everything was based on their ‘best effort.’ It came time for me to step back and say we needed more control.”

Focus shifted to the company’s Eugene, Oregon, facility, which housed much of the company’s hardware and mission-critical applications. “We had to decide whether to hire internal people to manage the servers and whether to build out the server room in Eugene,” Spoden explains. “We had redundant power but it wasn’t sufficient. We didn’t have proper AC cooling and we needed to develop a higher level of security. There were just a lot of areas that needed help in our Eugene server room.”

Spoden and some senior managers quickly ascertained their dilemma. They could hire an IT staff and substantially upgrade facilities. Or they could outsource at least part of the company’s IT and put the servers off site to avoid the facilities upgrade. But they found themselves in yet another dilemma: Needing to know the cost of outsourcing so they could decide what to do, but not being able to identify those costs until they had evaluated and selected a vendor for the outsourcing.

“The two decisions were intertwined,” Spoden says, “and it took about two months to sort it all out.”

SELECTING AND MIGRATING

“EasyStreet stood out from the other vendors were looked at because of its excellent reputation in the Portland area. They had a competitive price, were very clear about what their sweet spot was and they guided us toward a solution we felt good about,” Spoden explains.

To the IT manager, that sweet spot had two aspects. One was EasyStreet’s state-of-the-art Network Operations Center (NOC) and the other was EasyStreet’s clarity regarding IT responsibilities.

“They were very clear about where the boundaries were, so it wasn’t like, ‘Is this you or is this me?’ he says. “We know clearly that anything within their



Waylon Spoden is Organically Grown’s IT manager. He’s the interface between the food wholesaler’s management team and EasyStreet on all matters related to improving reliability as Organically Grown continues to experience the pressure of intense growth.

walls is their management and anything inside ours is our responsibility. They made that very clear, whereas other companies seemed to want to get everything as their responsibility — ‘oh, yeah, we can do this and we can do that’ — yet they weren’t able to actually promise the basic service level we wanted.”

EasyStreet’s Network Operations Center (NOC) in the Beaverton facility monitors and analyzes customer data 24/7, watching for potential issues. If one arises, NOC technicians alert the customer’s designated contact person by means of a pre-defined escalation path. EasyStreet’s NOC processes more than 26,000 network messages a day, and technicians get to know each machine’s performance characteristics for efficient and accurate analysis of events.

Organically Grown and EasyStreet reached a clear delineation of responsibilities based on the client’s current and future IT requirements.

- Organically Grown moved its data processing to EasyStreet’s Data Center, including the Microsoft® Exchange® email server, Active

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Directory® server and SharePoint® server, for which EasyStreet provided new hardware.

- At the Data Center, EasyStreet manages the company’s hardware, operating systems, Exchange and SharePoint application software. It also provides out-of-band access for Organically Grown’s remote offices.
- Plus, EasyStreet provides a colocation cabinet with remote power management and tape-rotation backup services for the CRM/ERP servers, which continue to be managed by a third party.

Software from Produce Pro, Inc., functions as Organically Grown’s key enterprise resource planning (ERP) tool, processing all data related to accounting, inventory management, sales, shipping and receiving, and purchasing.

“Produce Pro, as our ERP, is our bread and butter, the system we live or die by,” Spoden says. “Keeping that server up and running — making sure it would never go down and would always be accessible — was a big part of this whole process. We realized we could not stand a big power failure and not have it operating. That’s why it’s at the EasyStreet site.”

EasyStreet’s Data Center is hardened with multiple layers of security, reliability and protection. It is engineered to avoid any single point of failure in connectivity, power or air conditioning.

MANAGING FOR SUCCESS

Achieving a successful, on-time implementation resulted from open and on-going communication between the Organically Grown and the EasyStreet teams.

“We all sat down and hammered out the details as to what needed to happen and then we worked out all the details,” Spoden says. “From that point, EasyStreet provided me with a weekly project update that illustrated all the steps we’d completed and what still had to be done. They were very good about reminding me of the things I still needed to get to them. They kept me on track. We actually hit our date of completion and moved all of these things from our infrastructure into theirs within the time we’d allotted.”

Spoden said he has been pleased with the level of support EasyStreet has provided: “Support has been top-notch. Every time I call, I get somebody. And that somebody either takes measures right away to troubleshoot over the phone, or they



Organically Grown’s warehouse in Clackamas, Oregon, is filled with nature’s bounty floor to ceiling. The company is the largest distributor of organic produce in the Pacific Northwest.

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immediately get somebody who can help us out.”

In fact, he relates an incident he says captures the spirit of having EasyStreet as his managed services provider.

“EasyStreet is very proactive,” he says. “We have a different vendor managing our internal file servers and active directory servers. One day our server in Eugene went down for about an hour, and I got an email from EasyStreet saying, ‘Hey, your DCO1 server’s not replicating out here, so we want to let you know that something’s up. It wasn’t until much later that I heard about the same server problem from the vendor who’s actually managing that server. So there’s a case where EasyStreet went above and beyond to make me aware of a situation even before the vendor who we pay to manage the thing.

“EasyStreet is good that way. You can tell they really take pride in keeping your business going. In fact, they’re adamant about it.”

AN EVOLVING ACCEPTABILITY

“In organic produce, people get used to a certain level of dependability,” Spoden explains. “Things sometimes slip through the cracks and some food spoils and the farms don’t deliver the quantity they said they were going to deliver. It’s the nature of the business. But our company is very grass roots and we have our own notions about the quality of things, of what’s acceptable.

“For some time in our IT portion of the business, it was acceptable to be at a certain level — ‘ Oh, the server just went down? I guess we’ll just hang out for a while’ — but that was then and that’s no longer where we want to be. Now it’s one of our objectives to switch from a break/fix scenario to one with a rock-solid foundation.

“So when we realized we wanted a higher level of service, I convinced our CFO and management team that it comes with a price tag. And if they don’t want to pay it, they might ultimately be paying for it in other ways: in loss of customer satisfaction, or just the cost of not being able to do business for extended periods of time. The risk-mitigation factor.

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ABOUT EASYSTREET ONLINE SERVICES

EasyStreet owns the longest-standing record of customer satisfaction of any Managed Services Provider (MSP) or Internet Services Provider (ISP) in the Pacific Northwest. The reason is its people — from

its team of skilled IT technicians and expert support staff to its forward-thinking senior management.

EasyStreet was founded in 1995 to provide an array of services satisfying the IT needs of area businesses. EasyStreet has been recognized repeatedly by the Portland Business Journal as one of Oregon’s “Most Admired Technology Companies,” one of the state’s “100 Fastest Growing Companies,” and ranks among the Deloitte & Touche “Technology Fast 50.”

EasyStreet has been connected to the Internet since 1995 — continuously, without a single interruption.

EasyStreet’s facility in Beaverton, Oregon, is physically secure, with state-of-the-art technology engineered for the highest levels of reliability. Its Data Center features a sophisticated network infrastructure protected by redundant power, advanced fire protection and superior physical security. Its Network Operations Center (NOC) has advanced tools for monitoring network presence to ensure maximum uptime.

EasyStreet’s national-class facilities provide customers with superior technological performance, scalability and reliability.

For more information about EasyStreet’s wide range of IT Infrastructure Services, visit www.easystreet.com or call 503-646-8400.



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