GAP Delivers Hospitable, Cost-Effective Services to BusinesSuites

Austin, Texas-based BusinesSuites provides office space to individuals and small businesses. Since its founding in 1989, it has expanded to employ about 60 employees at 18 locations in Texas, Nevada, Maryland, and Virginia. In 2009, BusinesSuites was named the national winner of the Dell/National Federation of Independent Businesses' Small Business Excellence Award.

While BusinesSuites was meeting or exceeding many of its clients' needs, the fast-growing company still lacked some basic online services. This forced customers to rely on manual processes that were only available during business hours. If customers wanted to book or change a conference room reservation, for example, they had to call a BusinesSuites employee during office hours to make arrangements. That employee would then check for available conference rooms and times and try to match it to the client's schedule. Customers also could not make payments online.

"Providing online self-services are what clients expect to have," said Connie Shortes, Vice President of Operations at BusinesSuites. "While they loved what we offered, they wanted to have better access and we wanted to reduce costs and eliminate the inefficiencies of this manual process."

It was clear that BusinesSuites needed a way for clients to handle their own conference room reservations and make payments online. The next step: Deciding how to make it happen.

BusinesSuites considered hiring an in-house developer. This option had the advantages of a predictable cost, control over the project, and being the employee's sole focus. However, it also came with the cost and time of recruiting the right person—and the project would have been limited to the expertise of a single individual. Further, once the project was completed, the developer would still be a full-time employee.

> "We would have been committed to paying a salary and benefits after project completion. That would have been about $80,000 to $100,000 a year, plus recruiting costs,"
>
> - Connie Shortes, Vice President of Operations at BusinesSuites.

COMPANY NAME:	BusinesSuites
BUSINESS:	Executive Suite Industry
LOCATION:	Austin, Texas
URL:	http://www.businessuites.com/
BUSINESS CHALLENGE:	BusinesSuites needed to develop a new web-based portal for clients to self-manage their accounts and conference room bookings, but didn't have the resources available.
BUSINESS SOLUTION:	Using outsourced development services from Growth Acceleration Partners (GAP), BusinesSuites was able to define and develop a new online portal that provided the services its clients demanded.
BENEFIT:	BusinesSuites delivered the services it needed in a cost effective and timely manner, without incurring the additional expense and management burden of hiring full-time staff.

Next, BusinesSuites considered hiring a local independent contractor. The company quickly dismissed this option once it determined the cost of hiring a local developer. These contractors often have rates higher than $100-$150 per hour. And these experts are frequently engaged in multiple projects for different companies at the same time. BusinesSuites would have had very little control over the project, and as with an in-house developer, the project would have been limited to one person's ability.

Additionally, if BusinesSuites was unhappy with the end-result, someone else would have to fix the original contractor's work—a time-consuming and costly proposition.

Then, BusinesSuites looked at using an outsource development firm. Their costs can be much less than local developers since they use resources located in far-away countries such as India or the Philippines. While the cost was initially attractive, BusinessSuites was concerned that cultural and time zone differences with offshore services would create additional challenges and costs.

Another business in Austin recommended Growth Acceleration Partners (GAP). The near-sourcing service provider offered an attractive outsourcing solution that blended the cost effectiveness of offshore firms, with a development team in a similar time zone and a shared cultural approach.

As a firm, GAP provided a wider breadth of strategic expertise to assist with the initial project design and development. Once the project was scoped and work started, GAP assigned an account manager who was there to manage the project. This quickly proved to be a big asset as the account manager oversaw the project to ensure schedules stayed on-course, or surfacing technical or business issues for resolution. This was especially beneficial because even talented, driven, independent contractors in software development are not always adept at handling the business part of the arrangement, said Shortes.

In addition to GAP's advantage over an in-house developer or independent contractor in cost, expertise, and convenience, GAP provided superior service at about half the price of an onshore development firm, said Shortes.

> "Working with GAP, we were able to deliver a timely solution to our clients at a price that was very appealing to our bottom line. Service and efficiency is a great combination."
>
> - Connie Shortes,
> Vice President of Operations
> at BusinesSuites.

GAP was the ideal solution. GAP helped BusinesSuites by using a team of developers in Costa Rica to develop an online portal for customers to make payments and reservations. The project was developed quickly and delivered to market so BusinesSuites can now provide clients with the services they expect and need.

"Our company philosophy and success is based on customer service," said Shortes.