

Powering Growth Through Modernized IT Outsourcing Strategies

Case Study: Sloan Valve

Efficiency Driving Innovation

Since 1906, Sloan Valve Company has been the world's leading manufacturer of commercial plumbing systems. The company's success stems from its commitment to delivering high-quality, water-efficient products, from flushometers and electronic faucets to soap dispensers and sink systems for commercial, industrial and institutional markets worldwide. A pioneer of the green-building movement, the company consistently strives to create better products with technology that maximizes efficiency and minimizes waste.

This commitment to creating efficiency isn't limited just to its products and solutions, however. It's a mantra that seeps deep into every corner of the organization, including Sloan's own IT infrastructure. For Tom Coleman, Sloan's Chief Information Officer, achieving efficiency became priority number one, and this required a shift in IT strategy from having everything on premise to migrating applications like SAP to a hybrid cloud services model.

"I'll be honest. Initially, I wasn't in favor of outsourcing. The company pays me to manage our environment, and outsourcing felt like we were paying money to have someone else do our job," mentioned Coleman. "However, as the company grew, my focus and that of my team needed to be on supporting business strategy, and working with the business units to enable supply chain, digital commerce, product lifecycle and engineering initiatives through technology. Not building servers, performing upgrades and managing databases.

Assessing the Current IT Infrastructure

Historically, Sloan managed and maintained its entire IT infrastructure on-premise, right down to the data center. The approach suited the business in its early days, but was difficult to scale as the company grew and its technology requirements evolved. As the strain on resources to balance both day-to-day operations and strategic initiatives became apparent, Coleman decided to explore outsourcing more service-oriented functions like ERP to a third-party service provider.

"We have a very strong CFO, who strives to keep operating-expense increases to a minimum year over year," said Coleman.

“ As we considered how best to scale our IT environment to accommodate our growing business, it quickly became clear that outsourcing was the most cost-effective option for us. ”

"To build and manage it ourselves, we would have needed a significant increase in internal staff, hardware, cooling equipment, backup and redundancy systems, physical security, 24x7 coverage, and a host of other resources and capabilities. There's just no way we could afford to make and maintain that kind of investment. Alternatively, outsourcing would give us everything we need, while freeing my team to focus more on IT strategy."

The Competitive Edge

That's when Coleman and his team began to research potential outsourcing partners. While cost was a consideration, it was not the primary criteria. "Uptime was most important. You get what you pay for and this was not an area we wanted to skimp. So, the ability to demonstrate superior performance, constant availability and general service excellence took precedence over everything else," emphasized Coleman.

Another important requirement was simplicity – the ability to do business with ease versus a lot of complexity and red tape. "This was new territory for us, and we needed a partner that could work with us and adapt to our needs as they changed. Agility was critical. We didn't want a partner that put the terms of a contract ahead of our success."

In the end, Sloan chose Symmetry from a pool of five candidates. Symmetry is a leader in SAP application management and hybrid cloud hosting services, and Sloan was familiar with the caliber of service they delivered, their SAP expertise, and their reputation in the hybrid cloud services space due to some projects the two companies collaborated on in the past.

That familiarity was not the only reason Sloan chose Symmetry, however. As Coleman noted, "Symmetry was not the cheapest solution we evaluated, but they stood out in a few key areas that were important to us. First, they came to the table with great clarity – they were very easy to do business with at every step in the process, right down to the project quote. Second, they were incredibly flexible. Working out the details of a project as significant as this can be challenging, especially with so many players involved on both sides, and Symmetry showed tremendous grace throughout the entire process."

Coleman continued, "The other thing that struck me about Symmetry is that they are more like us. Sloan is a company that believes in relationships over contracts, and we wanted a partner that did the same. This was exactly the vibe we got from Symmetry, and they have proven that instinct correct every step of the way. Their commitment to our success set them apart from the pack and was one of the primary reasons we chose them in the end."

Modernizing IT With the Right Partner

In collaboration with Symmetry's account team, Sloan is implementing Symmetry's flagship hosting service, SAP Basis Foundation management service and disaster recovery service, as well as its award-winning ControlPanelGRC[®] offering. Sloan was not using a governance, risk management and compliance solution previously and decided to expand the project to take advantage of Symmetry's capabilities in this area.

The project will be completed in the coming months, and to date, everything is running smoothly and on track. According to Coleman, "We're bringing multiple parts of the landscape together, which is not an easy thing to do. Our end goal is to go live seamlessly, and the way the project has been going thus far, I have every confidence that Symmetry will make that happen."

In looking back, how does Coleman feel about his decisions to outsource and move to a hybrid cloud model?

"The fact is, in today's environment, you can't have everything on premise, even if you want to. A hybrid cloud model is the only approach that makes sense. For any company that is contemplating the move, just ask yourself whether you have the equipment, the people and the expertise you need to manage it all yourself. Chances are that, just like us and like most organizations, you don't. And that's what makes outsourcing (even something as fundamental as your ERP infrastructure) an absolute no-brainer in the end. You just need to have the right partner to help you get there, and for us, that's Symmetry."

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