

Clients & Profits Case Study



Company:
EchoStar Communications Corp.
Denver, Colorado

Business:
Satellite Communications

Staff:
34-person in-house
communications department

System:
Clients & Profits Pro
Macintosh

After 20-odd years as a professional photographer, Roger Reynolds paused at a career crossroads. Photography, like separations and film output, has gone digital. Although he was Denver's first digital photographer and had a well established roster of clients (including EchoStar), he felt a tug in another direction. About that time, Arnold Gonzales, EchoStar's director of Creative Communications, offered him an on-staff position: they needed to put Clients & Profits to work.

EchoStar, the industry leader in satellite communications, decided to purchase Clients & Profits Pro for their 6-person Corporate Communications department in 1997. Even though the software would be used for their in-house department, they chose Clients & Profits Pro. "We wanted the complete package," Roger explains. Looking toward the future, the company is planning to set up Corporate Communications as a stand-alone division with accounting functions. Once completed, the division will be able to provide financial statements for corporate consolidation--and maintain division budget controls on a more immediate basis. "Getting Pro instead of Job Tracker puts us one step ahead when we're ready to go in that direction," Roger says. Since 1997, Corporate Communications has grown to 34 staffers and broken into four departments: creative services, video, internet, and live broadcast. "Our next step," Roger says, "is to set up the departments as profit centers in Clients & Profits" for cost and profitability analyses.

Going live

After limping along for nearly four years using only the job tickets in Clients & Profits, EchoStar hired Roger to maximize the use of Clients & Profits in the communications department. "When I got here, all they were using was the job ticket," Roger says. "They would enter basic information into the job ticket window, print it out, and put it on an envelope." After the jobs were entered into the database, they were virtually ignored. "They were using C&P for a job log," he says, "but didn't use scheduling, traffic, change orders, or time cards. It was a mess."

While their early system was working (sort of), there was lots of room for improvement. Under the direction of Dianne Powers (the creative services marketing manager for EchoStar), Roger adapted Clients & Profits to their existing workflow. The improvement was fantastic. "Creative Services is light years ahead of where it was," he says, "but we still have light years to go." Roger started by closing the 6,000 or so open job tickets. He then rebuilt the database, setting up 14 job type/spec sheets to streamline the data entry. "We have one for logos, one for banners, and so on. Using job types really makes for a quick turn on jobs," he says. He also implemented existing job trafficking and scheduling procedures. "The most helpful thing is C&P email," Roger says. "Since we're now set up with status codes and milestones, notices go straight through to the person in charge of the job." And the new scheduling process has helped the four departments understand what a

"Getting Pro instead of Job Tracker puts us one step ahead when we're ready to go in that direction."

-- Roger Reynolds
System Manager

Clients & Profits Case Study **EchoStar Communications**

All of the department's four project specialists input job tickets—sometimes dozens a day—to schedule tasks and keep the work flowing smoothly through creative.

realistic schedule is. Now Corporate Communications has detailed reports and schedules—which gives teeth to an emphatic “no” when someone walks in and wants a job done in an afternoon. “I can show managers how long a job takes and what it takes to finish it,” Roger says.

He also developed a Clients & Profits workflow chart. From this template, the department can easily plug in start and due dates, milestone dates, and other key information. “We hand it to the manager so they know exactly where their job will be as specific times,” Roger says.

Currently, the creative services division is the heaviest user of Clients & Profits. “We’re rolling it into the other departments,” Roger explains. For example, the company’s video department uses scheduling and job tickets, but depends on creative services to do the data entry. “We’ll set them up as a cost center and bring them up to speed over the next year,” Roger says. “Then they can do their own work.”

Implementing controls

Keeping on top of about 200 active jobs at a time is no small feat. “My day starts with a production meeting first thing in the morning,” Roger says, “then we have another short, informal one before we go home to check up on the day’s progress.” Production reports generated from Clients & Profits, along with automatic email sent when job status codes change, simplifies the process significantly. But some really big, complex jobs are supplemented with two magnetic job boards. “We use colored magnets to mark days and status codes so every-

one can see right where a job is,” Roger says. “We run all kinds of jobs through C&P,” Roger says. The department produces a variety of collateral such as hats, logos, pens, banners, balloons, posters, and in-store displays for dish distributors. Additionally, EchoStar produces in-house video specials, commercials, and other broadcast media.

All of the department’s four project specialists input job tickets—sometimes dozens a day—to schedule tasks and keep the work flowing smoothly through creative. “They deserve major kudos for all their work on the front line,” Roger says. With the four specialists staying on top of the work-to-do, the department is able to maintain a good and accurate schedule. Now, the communications department can pinpoint downtime for the artists, which lets them “plug in” small jobs. “Some of the smaller, quick-turn jobs aren’t scheduled,” Roger says. “It would take more time to do that than to finish the job.”

One of the first things Roger did when he came on board was check out the built-in reports in Clients & Profits. Not only does he run several workflow reports, he also dug into financial analysis. (“I had just finished my MBA,” Roger explains, “and looking at the numbers just came naturally.”) One of the managers wanted a little more information about a certain job, so Roger ran a couple of reports from Clients & Profits. They discovered that there were 150 hours logged to the job, but no work had been produced! “Management was floored,” he said. Another unpleasant surprise showed 47 hours of time logged to a job that was canceled. By analyzing these reports, EchoStar can see how

“Once they saw the reports available, they were more okay with adapting to Clients & Profits.”

— Roger Reynolds
System Manager

Clients & Profits Case Study **EchoStar Communications**

Although there was some initial resistance to the new use of Clients & Profits, the breakthrough occurred after the company demonstrated the vision of the corporate communications department. By showing them where the department is going, a lot of resistance to the new system evaporated.

much we're spending and why. "It's really helped us take control and educate the other departments about what we can and can't do."

Motivating the crew

Although there was some initial resistance to the new use of Clients & Profits, the breakthrough occurred after the company demonstrated the vision of the corporate communications department. By showing them where the department is going, a lot of resistance to the new system evaporated. "Once they saw the reports from Clients & Profits, they were more okay with adapting to Clients & Profits," Roger says. (Not to mention that the word came down that anyone who didn't want to use it could look at the classifieds.) "Folks got motivated to take 20 minutes to add their time," he says. Since the project specialists (the folks who make sure the jobs get done) were used to entering data in to Clients & Profits, the greatest resistance was adapting to creating schedules. But once they realized the value of scheduling and data tracking they grew to depend on it. "Now, if we have a power failure or tornado or something that pulls the system down, we can't be without it," Roger says.

EchoStar Communications Corp. was founded in 1980 by Charlie Ergen, his wife Cindy, and James DeFranco. Over the past two decades, the company has been blazing a trail in satellite television. Noted for an impressive list of industry "firsts," EchoStar recently won the "Best of What's New" award from Popular Science for developing in cooperation with WebTV Networks, Inc. the DISHPlayer, the world's first interactive satellite TV receiver.

EchoStar is traded on NASDAQ as DISH and DISHP, and was ranked 551 by Fortune Magazine in 2001. The company is the twentieth largest media company in the world, ranked by Ad Age, and second only to DirecTV in its media sector.

For information about Clients & Profits, call (800) 272-4488