

San Luis Obispo County, California

Trading IT Burden for Peace of Mind in the Cloud

Nestled in California's Central Coast, San Luis Obispo County is known for its unique blend of beaches, mountains and rural, "old-time" California charm. Agriculture, tourism and California Polytechnic State University are the pillars of its economy, and the County is the state's third largest producer of wine. Known for its rich history, the County is also home to Hearst Castle and Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, which was founded in 1772.

One Department of Many

Running an environmental health department can be resource-intensive with the demands of maintaining hardware and software. As San Luis Obispo County Environmental Health Services discovered, sometimes you have to strategically relinquish some control to have better overall command of your business.

"It was not just lack of staff," explains former Director Curt Batson, when asked why his department transitioned its Accela Environmental Health solution from an agency-hosted environment to an Accela-hosted one in 2010. "San Luis Obispo County has centralized County IT and health agency IT, and our Division depends completely on both. But we're one department of many, and they often have higher priorities."

Robin Hendry provided part-time IT support to several departments. "I was allocating about five hours a week to Environmental Health," says Robin, "which made for a delicate balance. You have to manage day-to-day problems, users, configuration and updates to the software, in addition to managing the servers."

"It became clear that hosting was our best option. With Accela's cloud hosting, I am a higher priority. The only decisions I have to make is when I want to upgrade software versions, and beyond the monthly fee, I don't have to budget for anything else."

Curt Batson

Former Director, Environmental Health Services



Population

283,405

Challenge

Reduce reliance on IT staff and increase productivity by eliminating the burden of maintaining an IT system in-house

Solution

Accela Environmental Health

Results

Transitioned IT services to cloud hosting and reduced time, labor and financial investment in maintaining in-house system

Eliminated burden of managing and updating Environmental Health IT infrastructure against agency-wide IT priorities

Empowered department to focus time and effort on environmental health work instead of IT

Made budgeting for IT easier with a predictable monthly line item cost

Freed existing, limited IT resources from maintaining hardware



Removing the Hassle of IT Management

Even with Hendry's expertise, the division was still hindered by the demands of maintaining its system, like replacing outdated machines. In addition to time spent on data and configuration, Batson said, "...there were also the servers, hardware and software. They'd get old and need to be updated and you'd have this unexpected expense that you had to come up with periodically."

Such demands were often overshadowed by more pressing program priorities. "These technology needs were rarely on my radar," says Batson. "I was trying to deal with environmental health issues. I'm the budget guy, I'm the program guy. I'm just not thinking about anticipating IT needs. And once you hear that something is wrong, you make the request to IT, and it has to fit into the priorities of the other divisions agency-wide. It might get done in six months, or it might not."

Also, just because an upgrade was needed didn't mean Environmental Health could move forward. Explains Robin, "Agency IT couldn't unilaterally say, 'Okay, everybody is going to go to the latest version of Windows Server,' because there was always one department running software that didn't work on that version, and so everyone would be held back."

The No-Hassle Approach to IT Management

Moving to a hosted environment is contingent on several variables, including agency policy, internet reliability and bandwidth, and how much control the agency prefers or is required to maintain over maintaining its own system. For many Accela Environmental Health customers, the benefits of operating in the cloud, unburdened by technical demands, made it an easy decision.

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The transition happened very quickly, freeing up staff time to focus on the most important work: protecting public health. "It's almost hard to compare before and after," says Batson, "because everything just happens now quite seamlessly. Whereas before it was a conscious decision that had to be made, when you had to purchase the software or hardware and then get in line for priority. From my point of view, that's great. It's very critical to our operation, but it just doesn't come up all the time, and I trust the service and that my data is secure."

About Accela

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