IDEA Creates a Superior Customer Experience with Connectria Managed Services

Challenge
IDEA needed a managed service provider who could manage their cloud environment 24x7, with a focus on security and compliance.

Selection Criteria
• Round-the-clock administrative staffing
• Heavy emphasis on security skills
• Deep knowledge of GDPR and other compliance requirements

AWS Services Used
• EC2

Results
IDEA chose Connectria to manage its cloud platform to ensure platform reliability and security for the hundreds of manufacturers and distributors that have made IDEA's solutions part of their daily workflow. Today, Connectria operates as an extension of IDEA's in-house IT team, providing 24x7 cloud visibility, compliance, security, and cloud management services.

Established in 1998 by the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) and the National Association of Electrical Distributors (NAED), IDEA provides manufacturers and distributors with the tools they need to manage daily operations effectively. Their mission is to be a single source of complete, high-quality data that allows businesses to make the best decisions possible.

The Challenge

In support of IDEA's mission, they've created a variety of tools such as IDEA Connector, a Master Data Management (MDM) platform that enables distributors to securely access accurate and timely product and pricing data directly from manufacturers. IDEA Exchange, another key platform from IDEA, is an electronic data interchange (EDI) that enables manufacturers and distributors to exchange eBusiness documents such as purchase orders, invoices, and advance ship notices faster, easier, and more securely than traditional Value-Added Networks (VANs) or paper-based methods.

IDEA currently supports several hundred manufacturers and distributors in the electrical industry, as well as other sectors, that rely on their solutions. Because these tools are part of their customers' daily workflow, reliability is a must. If they can't access the platforms, users would have to resort to older paper-based methods of doing business. These methods are inherently more time-consuming and error-prone. Security is also vital as many of the documents exchanged involve sensitive data such as pricing and product specs.

CASE STUDY

IDEA maintains a small internal IT staff, but managing the cloud isn't a key skill set. As Bill Shomo, Director of Information Technology at IDEA, said, "Our forte is data. Our IT team is really in the business of customer service. They do day-to-day maintenance of the platform and address any data quality issues that arise. They also perform tasks such as setting data format standards and doing data validations. Some of this is IT-related, but more than that, it requires a deep knowledge of content and data and a focus on our customers."

To ensure security and a superior customer experience for users of its platforms, IDEA decided to outsource its cloud management platform responsibilities to a managed service provider.

The Solution

Like many organizations, IDEA turned first to providers that specialized on their development platform. Unfortunately, these providers were too narrowly focused. A deep knowledge of IT and cloud security was one of the most vital missing elements.

"I managed a federal and DOD data center at IBM for years," said Shomo. "Having come out of that environment, I understand the importance of IT security and the kind of effort it takes to maintain it. I just didn't see that skill set in most of the providers we looked at, except for Connectria. They've been managing enterprise class systems for 20+ years; whereas, so many other providers are just getting into the game."

IDEA also wanted a provider that was able to handle the compliance requirements of a global organization. "We're considering expanding into the European market. Compliance with GDPR and being able to withstand the scrutiny of their audits was another big component in our decision to work with Connectria," said Shomo.

Finally, for manufacturers and distributors, business happens around the clock. It just wasn't feasible for IDEA to staff up it's in-house IT team to serve the needs of its customers. They needed a managed service provider that could provide better coverage of their systems, including 24x7 availability of administrators.

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> Director of Information Technology
> IDEA

CONNECTRiA

The Results

The IDEA team has been very pleased with their working relationship with Connectria. "Connectria is very responsive," said Shomo. "It's like I have an extended IT team. We even have a weekly meeting with the leads of the different areas: admin, security, etc., where we discuss and review issues and areas for improvement. We also started using Connectria's ticketing system right from the start so that everything they do is well documented."

IDEA also uses TRiA, a cloud management tool from Connectria, to help them maintain visibility into their systems. "Just because we aren't managing our cloud environment doesn't mean we've given up responsibility for it," said Shomo. "We use the dashboards in TRiA to keep an eye on things like resource utilization and potential security issues. Having first-hand access to this information helps us communicate even more effectively with Connectria's engineers so we can make better, more informed decisions about our cloud environment."

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When asked what one piece of advice he would give to others looking to outsource cloud management to a managed service provider, Shomo said, "Look for the full-service capabilities of the provider. There are a lot of providers that do one thing or the other. Some offer the hosting component but are weak in areas like security. And, of course, there are a ton of companies doing cybersecurity, but sometimes, that's all they do. Having someone with a good balance of services can help you make sure you've got everything covered."

About IDEA

The Industry Data Exchange Association, Inc. (IDEA) is the official technology service provider and eBusiness standards body of the electrical industry. Since its founding by the partnership between National Association of Electrical Distributors (NAED) and National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) partnership in 1998, IDEA's applications provide value to vertical markets such as industrial, retail, and consumer packaged goods. Every year, thousands of manufacturers and distributors find the most cost-effective methods through IDEA's innovative products and processes. IDEA's applications help connect the supply chain and make business processes efficient, easy, and profitable while maintaining the highest standards of data quality. IDEA is headquartered in Arlington, VA.

For more information visit https://idea4industry.com

About Connectria

From Fortune 100 enterprises to medium and small businesses, Connectria provides managed cloud, managed services, and compliant cloud security solutions to more than 1,000 global customers. Working as an extension of each customer's IT team, we deliver technology-agnostic solutions consistently, with depth and breadth of engineering expertise, scalable solutions, and speed to market. Our "No Jerks Allowed®" philosophy includes flexible terms, straight-forward pricing, and custom solutions. With a culture based on integrity and an unwavering employee commitment to treating every customer with a relentless focus on satisfaction, it's easy to do business with Connectria.

Connect with us today

Talk to one of our IT advisors by calling **800.781.7820** or reaching out to us by email: **sales@connectria.com**.

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