

SUCCESS STORY

EARNING TRUST AS A MANAGED IT SERVICES PROVIDER AND MORE at Ruff Roofers



What Data Networks Did for Ruff Roofers

- Assumed responsibility as Ruff Roofers' managed IT services provider (MSP) and recommended innovative technology improvements based on Service Desk ticket trends and ongoing TAM interactions.
- Worked with Ruff Roofers' business stakeholders on strategic IT planning and implementation of new technology features and processes that improved operations.
- Became not only a world-class MSP for Ruff Roofers, but also a valued strategic planner and solution provider.

Abstract

Data Networks transformed Ruff Roofers IT infrastructure and operations, becoming not just a managed IT services provider but a strategic technology partner, enhancing efficiency through proactive service desk insights and seamless implementation of innovative solutions, earning trust and enabling focused leadership.

The challenge

Ruff Roofers ("Ruff") is a family operated roofing and sheet metal contracting company that serves the Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC markets. It has two locations - one in Baltimore and another on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Ruff employs 150 people, roughly one-third of which are office staff while the other team members are job site workers.

When its relationship with Data Networks began, Ruff was already doing business with another managed services provider (MSP). But according to Mack Carpenter, Ruff's Chief Financial Officer (CFO), it was time for a change. As he puts it, "Our incumbent MSP had grown into a large nationwide organization. While their performance of day-to-day services was acceptable, they lacked the expertise to adequately advise us and execute on strategic IT improvements such as migrating our data from on-premises servers to the cloud. After talking with Data Networks, it was clear they could be both our MSP and a visionary technology partner."

The solution

When assuming responsibility for a new MSP client, Data Networks relies on a proven methodology to quickly become their trusted partner. The onboarding of Ruff was no different. First, Data Networks engineers visited Ruff's facilities for an initial assessment of its current IT infrastructure, systems, processes, and overall technology environment to determine their readiness for managed services. This process included an inventory of all infrastructure and Microsoft application licenses, and collection of user access level data.

The team also spoke with key stakeholders and observed employee activity to understand how Ruff was using technology in its business processes at the time. There was a key takeaway. According to Harry Serra, Data Networks' Technology Alignment Engineer (TAM) for Ruff, "In the beginning, Ruff's equipment like switches, firewalls, and wireless access points (WAPs) were a mixture of different brands, originally purchased strictly based on availability. The infrastructure wasn't unified. We knew right away that we needed to get it that way."

Next, Data Networks conducted a formal Onboarding process to prepare Ruff's IT environment for the monthly managed services offered. This includes initiating the Service Desk, a core offering for MSP clients like Ruff. The Data Networks Service Desk provides both an email address and a self-service portal to which Ruff users may submit descriptions of issues which are automatically converted into tickets. Ruff generated a substantial number of tickets in the first few months. Not only did the Data Networks Service Desk perform typical triage, assignment, and resolution of every ticket, but the Service Desk also paid attention to recurring problems reported in tickets over time. "Our Service Desk looks for patterns in a client's incoming tickets and communicates these patterns along with specific recommendations for improvements to the TAMs," says Matt Mueller, a Data Networks Service Desk Engineer. One such pattern emerged with Ruff related to email storage.

Being a roofing company, Ruff users receive and send a lot of images and video files via email. Storage accumulates quickly. The Data Networks Service Desk received a lot of Ruff tickets indicating users weren't receiving email. Says Mueller, "Microsoft limits mailboxes to 50 gigabytes (GB), which isn't a realistic maximum for Ruff. We discovered Ruff wasn't using Microsoft Exchange's online archiving feature. So, we set up email archiving for all users so that when mailbox data reaches a maximum age, that data is automatically moved to an accessible archive that Microsoft doesn't count against the mailbox limit. This also saves Ruff some money in the process since archive storage is less expensive than primary storage."

Lastly in the onboarding process for Ruff, Data Networks assigned a dedicated Technical Alignment Manager (TAM) to help Mack and other Ruff leaders continuously evaluate and enhance their architecture. TAMs serve two primary functions: categorize and analyze submitted tickets over longer time periods to uncover potential projects that would improve Ruff's situation; and identify additional enhancement opportunities through conversations with Ruff stakeholders and onsite observations.

The Data Networks Service Desk also manages a business continuity/disaster recovery (BCDR) solution for Ruff and other clients, leveraging Datto Remote Monitoring and Management (RMM) to use agents installed on infrastructure endpoints to

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Our goal is to be your trusted technology advisor. So we staff highly-qualified engineers who bring years of experience and the most advanced technical certifications to every engagement. We assign them a single area of technical focus, a unique approach that allows them to continually update their skills and expand their specialized technical knowledge. And we arm them with documented best practices developed over more than 30 years of public-sector service.

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immediately detect errors such as backup failures. This RMM service, which Data Networks recommends to all its MSP clients, instantaneously alerts Service Desk engineers via auto-generated tickets so that problems are identified, worked, and resolved quickly.

In addition, Data Networks assigned a Strategic IT Success Manager to the Ruff relationship who would collaborate with the TAM and Ruff to create and maintain an “enhancement roadmap” as a short- and long-term project plan. “Our Client-TAM arrangement has been great for the Ruff partnership,” remarks Serra. “It’s imperative for MSPs like us to have a technology alignment and strategic IT planning process with our clients. It enables Data Networks to deliver both daily support and strategic vision.”

Senior Engineers Deliver Seamless IT Improvements

One of the things that sets Data Networks apart from other MSPs is our deep bench of senior Engineers and Solution Architects. Ruff has continued to rely heavily on Data Networks engineers, mostly for design and implementation of strategic improvements to infrastructure and applications which has reduced ticket volume significantly.

Data Networks has helped Ruff make great strides with several tech improvements. One example is cloud migration. According to Carpenter, “Our dedicated Data Networks team helped us move the contents of our on-premises servers to Microsoft Azure virtual machines (VMs), gave us Active Directory security, and installed Office 365 with OneDrive for all our users. It took Data Networks only six weeks to complete this, and our business is much better as a result.” Cybersecurity projects are also a current focus. Data Networks engineers are keeping Ruff compliant with the introduction of Microsoft Authenticator for two-factor authentication, KnowBe4 campaigns that teach users to avoid phishing attempts, and strong password-related practices. Finally, Data Networks engineers used all the knowledge gained from long-term ticket analysis and completed projects to install all the required technology infrastructure – from switches to firewalls to WAPs to a T1 line – in a new office building constructed for Ruff.

Ruff Roofers’ relationship with Data Networks as its MSP and strategic IT planning partner continues to get stronger.

Carpenter sums it up this way: “Data Networks helps me focus more on being a CFO like I need to be, and much less concerned about daily technology matters. They also help me with looking forward. I am very happy with how proactive and forward-thinking Data Networks engineers are when it comes to enhancing our technology capabilities.”