



SedonaOffice

Custom Alarm Success Story

Custom Alarm Modernizes
Processes to Better Serve
Customers and Enable Growth

Custom Alarm is a full-service, family-owned and operated, residential and commercial security business that employs more than 65 people. The company also offers sound and media solutions and runs its own state-of-the-art, UL® Listed, Five Diamond Certified central station. It serves southeastern Minn., southwestern Wisc., and northeastern Iowa from its main office in Rochester, Minn. Custom Alarm has expanded organically and through some key acquisitions, but even for a 45-year-old company, growing pains can be significant.

Similar to many other regional security companies, Custom Alarm strives to maintain the balance between being a medium-to-large-sized company and providing the kind of service that makes customers feel singularly attended to. “One of the biggest challenges is getting everybody to be on the same page communicating and making sure we’re all taking care of the customer in a timely manner,” said Melissa Brinkman, chief operating officer at Custom Alarm. She added that fully understanding the customer’s needs is key to getting things done right the first time.

This is where having a centralized database that has industry-specific, dealer-driven tools can help ensure that an extraordinary customer experience can be replicated again and again, regardless of who picks up the phone. “SedonaOffice helps with those challenges because of its infrastructure. As an organization we all continue to work on communicating information about our customers using

the Notes. Every time we talk to a customer, we’re adding information under General Notes which helps all of us better understand and know what is going on with the customer. Within the Job Management module, we utilize the different tasks, and utilize the tools and the notes area to communicate between departments and the status of a job. By adding information into the notes area, it eliminates the need to chase somebody down to find out ‘when was the last time we talked to the customer?’ or ‘who did you talk to and where are we at with job?’

Up until a year and a half ago, Custom Alarm managed its service ticket system on paper. “We’d print out our service tickets and our service dispatcher would write who was going where and at what time,” Brinkman shared. Even with a very challenging job for its service dispatcher, constant travel between the main office and job sites, the company’s service department felt quite productive and some were reluctant to implement a different system.

And yet the company’s management saw the need for change and looked to utilize the SedonaOffice Service module. Brinkman said that while the department seemed to work well, it was very difficult to analyze and quantify its productivity. “It wasn’t easy to measure and know how many customers sites our technicians visited and how many needed return trips each day because it was so delayed. The guys completed the tickets and by the time they were closed, there was such a big time gap. We were using a simple tick marking

system to try to capture the data, and that was not accurate or a good use of our peoples' time.”

Brinkman said the difference with using the Service Management module is marked. “I can tell by the fact of how many tickets we have in the queue and how old they are that we’re getting them in, getting them out, and getting customers taken care of more expediently.” Technicians now spend much less time in the office and no longer need to physically pick up new tickets throughout the day.

“We now schedule everything electronically on the Service Board through SedonaOffice,” Brinkman said. “As the day changes the technician’s FSUs (Field Service Units) are updated instantly allowing them to respond to the customers needs and eliminates the need for the dispatcher to call each technician to tell of the changes. All of the information regarding the service ticket is available for the technician to see electronically and he no longer needs to drive back to the office. He can call the customer directly letting them know of his expected arrival. We were at first apprehensive and not sure how the technicians would do using the notes and other features, we worked through that and started seeing some improvements almost immediately.” With plenty of input from technicians and management to get the new processes working optimally, the benefits of the electronic system became obvious to everyone within the first three to four months, Brinkman added.

Custom Alarm prides itself on its customer retention through excellent service. With a large number of long-time customers, it’s critical that the company reflects a high level of knowledge about them. “We have one customer who is very specific about when and who does any work at her site so we added permanent comments that automatically pop up each time you access her account. If you want to create a service ticket, the note will pop up in that area, and is another consistent way to remind someone of crucial information about that customer. An important benefit to adding this information directly on the customer account is that it eliminates the chance of someone forgetting and inadvertently upsetting the customer.”

In the security industry, efficiently and consistently maximizing various resources doesn’t just affect a business, it helps protect its customers as well. Brinkman strongly believes in strategic partnerships for this reason. “In the security industry, we have recurring invoices we mail out to our customers monthly that our staff used to print out, stuff, and mail out of our office.” Brinkman related as an example. “Through SedonaOffice and Bridgestone, we looked at partnership opportunities and leveraged their expertise and efficiencies in those areas and now have Bridgestone take care of sending out all of our invoices. This has made a significant impact on our business and freed up staff to do other important tasks.”

Partnerships such as these allows Custom Alarm more time to focus on providing additional products and services to best serve their customers, such as managed solutions, a current focus. Additionally, they continue to focus, as they did in 2011, to uniformly train all of their central station dispatchers which earned them the CSAA Five Diamond Certification. Or, to focus on false alarm reduction efforts, a priority for the company, which was recognized in 2011, when they received the PDQ Award.

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