

Meeting its Needs in Technology Helps Agency Meet Needs in the Community

That is what the Mid Michigan Community Action Agency, Inc. (MMCAA) does every day for those in need. MMCAA is a private, non-profit 501(c)3 organization that was established in 1966 to assist in the war on poverty. Today, it is still living its mission of 'supporting families and individuals by providing access to resources and opportunities.'

The MMCAA's reach includes six counties in mid-Michigan. Its 200 employees and 800 volunteers deliver a variety of services — from emergency housing, job placement and providing basic life needs — to more than 20,000 customers. MMCAA has over 80 contracts with federal, state and local organizations to provide these services.

MMCAA's relationship with Trivalent is a long-standing one, dating back to the mid-1990s before Mount Pleasant-based Entré became part of the Trivalent Group family of companies.

The relationship started with a basic need for computers, servers and support, but it wasn't long before MMCAA needed a much more technically elegant system. For one thing, the six-county area covered by MMCAA requires case workers and other employees to travel daily. With 16 remote locations and the complexity of delivering aid via so

many different federal programs, data had to be secure, accessed efficiently and highly integrated.

"Our agency has grown 12% each year since we began working with Trivalent. This growth includes expanded programs and funding, so naturally, support and technology needs grew, too," said MMCAA Chief Executive Officer Gary Gilbert. "Trivalent has stabilized and expanded our network, enhanced the integrity of our databases and improved our communication ability between sites, all of which we need to remain focused on our core mission."

MMCAA once had its own two-person technology staff, but over the years, realized that outsourcing this highly specialized, ever-changing field was best. Now, Trivalent has

an engineer on site part-time, and remotely runs MMCAA's employee help desk, troubleshooting technical issues for all staff, but especially those in isolated locations.

"We are their IT department now," said Rob Stout, Branch Director of Trivalent Group's Mount Pleasant location.

"They can be confident that qualified, friendly and available people are always there for them. They never have to worry about any computer-related issues."



CEO Gary Gilbert and Finance Director Debra Hoyt of MMCAA review shared documents that help the agency run more efficiently.

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MMCAA also benefited from Trivalent's circuitry expertise. Before Trivalent stepped in, MMCAA was paying more and experiencing headaches with its internet access. They liked the thought of bringing in a local company to handle it all, one with the depth and breadth to support an organization of MMCAA's size. Trivalent now handles all point-to-point T1 lines, DSL lines where necessary, and some hybrid lines, based on the staff, needs and location of each of MMCAA's sites.

Another service that Trivalent provides the organization is the annual network health review, which helps to predict and prevent any losses in data and locate potential problems that could cause downtime.

Speed of service was another factor. When MMCAA's remaining technical staff member left on short notice, the help desk from Trivalent was set up within two weeks. When viruses have hit in the past, Trivalent came in and stabilized the network immediately.

"The bottom line is that Trivalent quickly responds to the needs of over 100 computer users within our agency," said MMCAA Finance Director Debra Hoyt. "They have resolved our old distance issues, not to mention reduced the amount of paper-work we do and enhanced our capability to capture real time data."

Today, an MMCAA client can go in for assistance and the hardware and software that is in place allows the staff to see that client from a holistic perspective. All of his or her needs and challenges appear on one screen. This way, help can be delivered faster and more completely. Another advantage is one for MMCAA staff — the reporting that they have to do with each other and with partner agencies and federal programs is much simpler. Rather than doing a lot of faxing and handwritten notes back and forth, data is readily available at anyone's desktop or laptop.

"Our goal has always been to help MMCAA achieve its mission in a stable, organized, growth-ready environment," said Stout. "The people there have a lot of hard work to do, and we make it easier for them."

"Trivalent offers expertise and specialists in all areas. This includes working with our T1 Lines, DSL lines, managing and ordering our hardware and server needs," said Gilbert. "The service is comprehensive, and the Trivalent staff works well with our employees providing a comfortable working relationship for all." 



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