

J. Spargo Automates Processes to Improve Productivity

“Last week we did the AFCEA / USNI West show in San Diego and sold 300-some companies on site in three days with two people. Compared to previous years, it was easier, and everything went live to the website floor plan right away. We didn’t have to upload it back at the office, and we could invoice within a matter of days rather than months. It was all a2z.”

— James Spargo, Sr. Vice President, J. Spargo & Associates

CHALLENGE:

J. Spargo & Associates Inc. (JS&A) is a full-service event management company that provides end-to-end sales and service for more than 25 association trade shows each year. In the past, the company managed events using multiple applications for functions such as sales contact management, floor plan management, accounting and website development. Because they could not transfer data between these programs, JS&A staff members had to do redundant data entry for such fundamental processes as recording contact information and notes, assigning booths, confirming space contracts and invoicing. Even the on-site sales process had taken 30 to 60 days to complete, by the time invoices were mailed out.

SOLUTION:

To become more efficient and improve service, JS&A selected a2zShow Enterprise, a web-based event management platform that would eliminate multiple data entry tasks and automate sales and management processes. At the same time, in mid 2006, JS&A also converted to salesforce.com, a web-based customer relationship management application, which would transfer data to and from a2zShow. Prospects are now tracked in salesforce.com, and customers are tracked in a2zShow, with the data synching seamlessly between the two systems in real-time. This enables exhibit sales to see customer histories in salesforce.com and pull current contact information into a2zShow when they sign new contracts. With the number of applications JS&A uses reduced to two integrated systems, the staff spends less time doing administrative work and more time on sales and service.

RESULTS:

Using a2zShow has enabled JS&A to provide better client and customer service, and manage more events with the same size team. Still in the early stages of implementation — with 16 of 25 shows in the a2zShow systems — the company has already seen an increase in productivity that will eventually lead to increased exhibit sales. Future integration with web-based registration systems is expected to improve attendee marketing as well. Despite a substantial investment in this multi-management platform, JS&A projects it will take less than two years to recoup its investment. The efficiencies of process automation include:

- **Streamlined sales** — Process automation has reduced an eight-step exhibit space assignment process from 30–60 days to 2 minutes, with contracts, confirmations and invoices generated right on site.
- **Improved cash flow** — Clients collect on accounts receivable more quickly, since exhibitor invoices are issued in a fraction of the time.
- **Global access** — Staff can work from anywhere in the world with an Internet connection — from home, office, on site or at a hotel — guaranteeing business continuity for clients.
- **One-time data entry** — Customer information is entered into the system one time. That data is used for contract confirmations, invoices, reminder emails and virtual booth profiles.
- **Reduced IT support** — The web-based system is maintained entirely by a2z Inc., freeing up JS&A’s IT department for on-site systems support.
- **Robust reporting** — The flexible system allows JS&A to customize and save formats for on-demand reporting and analysis, with year-on-year and event-to-event comparisons.
- **Simplified website creation** — The easy-to-use application allows someone who’s not trained in web development to build custom event sites, freeing up the creative department for other assignments.
- **Fewer customer service calls** — The FAQ section of the website is available 24/7 to answer exhibitors’ questions.