



Customer: Hydrotech
Website: www.hydrotech.com
Customer Size: 105 employees
Country or Region: United States
Industry: Discrete manufacturing—
Industrial equipment

Customer Profile

Hydrotech, based in Cincinnati, Ohio, is a leading industrial technology provider for the Midwestern United States. The company was founded in 1967 and has 105 employees at three locations.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Office 365
 - OneDrive for Business
- Windows 8.1

Hardware

- Microsoft Surface Pro 3

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Industrial manufacturer streamlines work and modernizes its image with Surface Pro 3

“When people hear the word ‘tablet,’ they usually think of a convenient device with limited capabilities, but the Surface Pro 3 is a fully functional Windows-based machine just like any laptop or desktop.”

Ric Wilson, Director of IT Support, Hydrotech

Hydrotech wanted to make life easier for its mobile sales force by eliminating the need to carry bulky laptops into the field, so the company gave its sales team Surface Pro 3 devices. The reception was so positive that it decided to equip the service and management teams with Surface devices as well. Employees are using the devices to get more work done in less time and to help position the company as a thought leader in the industry.

A need for better sales mobility

Hydrotech is a leading manufacturing solutions provider and a distributor of hydraulics, pneumatics, and automation equipment. Following significant growth in recent years, Hydrotech decided to rethink its approach to IT in order to help its workers be more productive. “When I joined Hydrotech, my first goal was to find ways to make employees’ jobs easier so that they can work more efficiently and help the company thrive,” says Ric Wilson, Director of IT Support at Hydrotech.

A key issue Wilson needed to address was upgrading the technology used by the company’s mobile sales force. Employees carried bulky laptops that took up too

much space during customer visits and were missing important functionality—like an easy way to take pictures of customer equipment—so salespeople needed to bring extra devices, such as digital cameras. Wilson felt that the time was right to transition to more-mobile equipment with a focus on finding a lightweight device as powerful as a laptop.

The right device for many jobs

Some salespeople wanted to use iPads because they were familiar and portable, but Wilson was concerned that they lacked features such as USB ports to connect to printers or other peripherals. Because Hydrotech was already using Microsoft products in its datacenter, Wilson made it

his priority to find a device based on the Windows 8.1 operating system that would meet the sales team's needs and work well with the company's IT ecosystem.

Wilson was impressed by the power and portability of the Surface Pro 3, and the ability to join the devices to the company's domain. "The Surface Pro was exactly what we were looking for," says Wilson. "Up to that point, we had a BYOD policy and some of our employees wanted to use their iOS or Android devices to access the corporate network, but it was difficult for us to integrate them into our environment with the ability to manage them. Because Surface is a Windows-based device, integration is seamless. We can connect the devices to our Active Directory service and use our existing Group Policy settings to manage user accounts and establish a level of security for protecting sensitive company data that we couldn't have with the other mobile operating systems."

The Surface Pro 3 has been very popular with the company's salespeople, who spend 60 to 80 percent of their time on the road, usually seeing three or four customers a day. "It's lightweight, compact, and easy to take on customer visits," says Rod Gates, Sales Engineer at Hydrotech. "I can share information on the spot, rather than going back to my office and sending technical data, links, or product details later. This speeds up the quoting process and can help me close sales faster."

Over an hour gained daily

The success of the rollout to the sales team convinced Wilson that Hydrotech's on-site employees could benefit from using the Surface Pro 3. Jacob Price, Quality Inspector at Hydrotech, was one of the early adopters. "I used to take handwritten notes in the shop and then go back and enter them on my desktop PC," explains Price. "With the Surface, I can take notes wherever I am,

using the type cover or stylus pen. Eliminating all of the back-and-forth saves me over an hour a day, which lets me spend more time on inspections, upcoming audits, and new projects. The Surface has all the capabilities of my desktop PC, and I can carry it with me anywhere."

Rich Archdeacon, Lead Assembler and R&D Technician at Hydrotech, also relied on handwritten notes and a camera. Now the Surface Pro 3 has replaced both. "I take pictures with the Surface, and I can use the stylus pen to identify details in photos, mark up drawings, and add other notes," says Archdeacon. "Using the Surface has definitely made me more productive."

Mobile apps replace accessories

Vicki Dix makes sure that Hydrotech is a safe workplace. She used to carry around a laptop, a digital camera, and a decibel meter. "When I got the Surface, I went to the Windows Store to look for apps that might help me," says Dix, Environmental Health and Safety Manager at Hydrotech. "I found a sound level meter app, and an app to identify safety codes for hazardous chemicals. I can use these apps anywhere, which eliminates the need to carry extra equipment and code manuals. I don't even worry about bringing a power cord. One of the best features of the Surface is the battery life—my laptop needed to be plugged in after a few hours' use, but the Surface runs all day on a single charge."

A more modern image

As with the sales and service workers, the Surface Pro 3 has gotten a terrific reception from Hydrotech management. "In our industry, a lot of companies have older IT systems, and I saw the Surface as a great way to project a leading-edge image when we meet with customers or attend conferences," says Wilson. "Initially, I gave Rex Wetherill, President of Hydrotech, a

Surface device with a docking station, keyboard, and the Arc Touch Mouse. Since the Surface supports high-definition video, I also added an HD monitor. Rex liked the setup so much that he asked me to get Surfaces for the other managers. I don't think anyone else in our industry is using mobile devices in the way we use the Surface. It has caught people's attention, and I believe that it really positions us as a thought leader in our industry."

Hydrotech is currently rolling out the Surface to more than one-third of its employees. In addition to streamlining work throughout the company, the deployment has driven more technology upgrades. The company is looking at Microsoft Office 365 cloud-based communication and collaboration tools including OneDrive for Business cloud storage. They also use an app on the Surface to access its customer relationship management system.

Wilson has no doubt that the Surface Pro 3 was the best choice for Hydrotech. "When people hear the word 'tablet,' they usually think of a convenient device with limited capabilities, but the Surface Pro 3 is a fully functional Windows-based machine just like any laptop or desktop," says Wilson. "It's not a matter of there being 'an app for that'—the Surface runs the same programs that we've used all along. It makes work easier, and it's fun to use. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to anyone else in my position."