When LaserAge Inc., a Hamilton-based print and toner cartridge supply company was bought from its founder, the new owners knew changes were needed.

"When we purchased it, the business was very transactional-based, with a strong focus on just selling toner cartridges," recalls LaserAge CFO, Jennifer Kendall. "That’s not what I wanted the business to represent so we changed focus to deliver two types of services for customers, the traditional toner business and a new managed print service."

"When I arrived, everything was paper-based," adds Kendall which presents privacy and security concerns, not to mention the capabilities of the existing system were limited. "It was really a data entry screen that may have been great in its time but was just painful today. You needed an IT person to get any data out of it."

"If I was going to introduce a more customer service-based process with better security, I had to get away from this very old, DOS-based, very ugly system that was difficult to use," explains Kendall, noting the system limited what she wanted to do with the company.

Discovered Limited’s Shawn Huelin was tasked to bring LaserAge out of the DOS-age.

"They started out with a manual, DOS-based CRM system, if you can call it CRM. It was basically an electronic filing cabinet for customer notes of no more than 80 characters," recalls Huelin. "The system wouldn’t let them serve customers the way they wanted, or customers expected."

Discovernet transformed software environment to deliver a complete CRM and ordering solution, built on a network server infrastructure powered by Intel® Xeon® processor E5-4600. For mobility, Discovernet equipped staff with new laptop, desktop or tablet PCs using a range of Intel® solutions including Ultrabook™ devices featuring Intel® Core™ i7 processor technology.

Transforming Customer Service

"While it might seem like a little thing, the new solution allowed LaserAge to track multiple contacts at one account which they couldn’t do before," says Huelin. "The next thing was to create an integrated ordering system because the DOS system they were using up to three years ago used codes to keep order information under 80 characters. Orders were being missed and mistakes were made when codes were entered. They also couldn’t easily look up past orders."

"We really helped bring them out of the dark ages," recalls Huelin, with Kendall adding "I know that my vision is being..."
or closer to being delivered than when I walked in because of the investment.”

Order accuracy increased, customer complaint calls dropped and sales representatives had more information at their fingertips when talking to customers about pending orders including competitor pricing.

**Proactive Print Management**

Moving beyond transaction-based selling of toner, Kendall saw a need for a more service-oriented solution where LaserAge could monitor office hardware, proactively support customer printing needs and advise customers of possible issues before they occurred.

“When we notice the toner is running low, we send a technician out to install a new one. If we see the machine is jamming, we can call to ask questions and get a technician out for repairs,” explains Kendall.

LaserAge customers can also tailor their print management package to their specific needs.

“We don’t have a one size fits all model. We are trying to provide a solution that matches specific customer needs,” says Kendall, noting the decision to launch managed print services has been good for business. “It is the fastest growing, most profitable side of the business today.”

“I needed to put other things in place before I could offer this kind of service,” Kendall explains, noting she needed hardware and software support to deliver on the vision.

“The investment in new technology was key to enabling the service,” says Kendall, adding they have seen a 10% business growth without increasing overhead.

Today, LaserAge is less dependent on paper because they have tools to track customers and the status of orders in real-time, which allows them to be more proactive with customers. One customer whose printing peaks during a project would often call in a panic when toner was running out. LaserAge can now see the spike and reach out to make sure the customer has adequate supply on hand.

With a solid software solutions and Intel®-powered network infrastructure, Kendall is looking at the next business evolution leveraging Discovernet expertise to offer customers document management services. They are also looking at services on the print side that can help customers reduce waste by automatically directing specific types of printing to non-colour machines and waste is reduced when printing things like emails.

**Mobile Service Enabled**

Upgrading desktop-level hardware was essential for LaserAge to deliver its vision. Kendall recalls it could take 15 minutes to simply boot up the previous systems. Discovernet helped Kendall select the right desktop and mobile solutions for each staff role, while allowing management the flexibility to work wherever they are.

“As a small business owner, you tend to work all the time and I wanted the flexibility to work wherever I was,” she said, adding she also wanted her team to be able to connect with up to date information from anywhere to show customers logs or reports.

Additionally, remote access means staff can record service calls, log repairs and have orders placed without having to return to the office to do the paperwork.

“When they come back to the office, they are not spending their time doing paperwork because it is already done,” says Kendall. “That frees them up to do their parts ordering or in-depot, repairs that have come in.”

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**Challenge**

After purchasing Hamilton-based LaserAge Inc., a print services, ink and toner company, the owners knew the old DOS-based customer system couldn’t deliver the information needed to support customers effectively or expand into the new services they wanted to offer.

**Solution**

Enter the modern age. A complete network overhaul by Discovernet Limited including new software to support service, customers and ordering was built on an Intel®-powered network infrastructure supported by ultra-portable PCs to facilitate and speed service delivery. The combined solution has allowed LaserAge to deliver on its customer-focussed business vision.

**Impact**

- Discovernet-hosted network infrastructure powered by Intel® Xeon® processor E5-4600 supports new CRM solution to allow business expansion resulting in up to 10% business growth.
- Truck-mounted Ultrabook™ devices featuring Intel® Core™ i7 processor technology let technicians enter customer orders or service details speeding invoicing and reducing receivables by approximately two weeks.
It also means billing is done immediately and with a business model in which LaserAge maintains inventory for customers, getting invoices delivered quickly speeds receipt of payments.

“The customers pay about as fast as they have ever paid but we get service invoices out within 24 hours now instead of 2 weeks,” she says. This means LaserAge is shaving 2 weeks off receivables. “We are getting the invoices out faster, which means we are receiving payments in 30 days and not 30 days plus 2 weeks.”

Another added benefit to mobility enabled by Ultrabook devices with Intel Core i7 processor technology has been managing staff schedules. Kendall said in the past they would have to have people on site during holidays. Today, she can be responsive and “help monitor everything from the comfort of my home”. It also means she’s not paying staff to sit in the office when the phone rings twice.

**Powering Service Delivery**

At Discovernet, having the right tools is mission critical and Huelin’s development team leverages the power of desktop PCs featuring 4th Generation Intel Core i5 processor family.

“A lot of the things we do is through virtualization. We are going to spin up four or five different virtual machines to test environments or make software changes,” explains Huelin. “They need to have the power so they can work on their schedule.”

With clients depending on their solutions, Huelin can’t afford the time to constantly travel across Toronto wasting hours in traffic to cope with compatibility issues.

Huelin chooses Intel because of experience with past software incompatibility on non-Intel machines. “The choice (to standardize on Intel) stuck because it hasn’t done us wrong. I know we can put mission critical applications on Intel processors and they are not going to break because of some kind of compatibility issue.”

*For more information on Intel® products, visit [www.intel.com/itcenter](http://www.intel.com/itcenter)*

**About LaserAge Inc.**

Based in Hamilton, Ontario LaserAge Inc. is a privately owned and operated office printing and imaging company providing customers with print supplies, repair services and a range of document printing and imaging solutions.

**About Discovernet Limited**

Building on extensive software development experience, Discovernet Limited helps businesses in the Golden Horseshoe become more effective, responsive and productive through a range of software, hosting and hardware solutions which are tailored to individual customer needs and priorities.

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