



Customer Success Story: Steve Brown Apartments

Since opening in 1980, Steve Brown Apartments (SBA) has seen its share of change in doing business.

As one of the apartment providers in the Madison area -- with 57 different locations and 1,764 units (and counting) -- the company has had to adapt to evolving tastes, needs and whims of customers for nearly 40 years. One thing that has not changed is the need for an efficient renting process and hassle-free daily life for its tenants. And a key to that has been technology.

"(Good) technology is huge for us," said Jenny Oppriecht, SBA's marketing director. She said it is incorporated in every aspect of the business. Whether it is resident record keeping, managing account ledgers, monitoring security cameras, providing in-unit internet, or helping residents communicate with SBA staff (primarily using email and online messaging tools), it all relies on technology.

She said SBA has always recognized the value of technology. In the early 90s, as Internet usage became common, the company knew it had to embrace the new technology. But finding a company that could handle multi-tenant dwellings was rare and often unreliable. So, SBA started ResTech Services as a branch of the company to serve as its IT provider. That arrangement worked for many years. Eventually ResTech repositioned itself as an Internet Service Provider, and the two companies separated, leaving SBA looking for a new IT provider to support their growing and diverse tech needs.

Oppriecht said SBA talked to several tech providers in the area but found it difficult to find a provider with flexible enough managed services -- until it found Applied Tech. In 2014, Applied Tech and SBA worked together to create a solution based on SBA's unique tech needs and ultimately outsource them to Applied Tech.

Since SBA has become an Applied Tech client, it has undergone numerous upgrades to technology. For example, a recent migration to SharePoint and Office 365 to get data/email into the cloud has resulted in many benefits to the company, according to Oppriecht.

"We were all using VPN to access files, and it seemed like it never worked properly. Our remote offices really had difficulties. There were redundancies, with lots of bottlenecks with files and getting connected. We were using refile tools that were archaic," she recalled. "Now, with the cloud, everything is streamlined. It saves so much time and hassle. Everyone has access and you can easily restrict file permissions if you need to."

Oppriecht doesn't expect this need for change to end anytime soon.

"There will always be more need for technology in residences. Whether it is faster internet speeds, access in units, connecting with different devices, or tools to ensure we can respond quickly and effectively to tenants living in our apartments, technology will play a big part," she said, adding she is happy to have Applied Tech on their side for whatever comes next.

"We're confident that we made the right choice in selecting Applied Tech as our IT Provider in 2014.

They have continually demonstrated their professionalism and knowledge, and we appreciate their responsiveness and customer-focused approach. Every project we've given them and every help desk ticket we've entered has been resolved for the long-term. They don't take shortcuts."

Daniel Petersen, COO at Applied Tech, said they are proud of the long working relationship with SBA.

"Just like Applied Tech, SBA doesn't take short cuts: they use technology to do business the right way," he said. "They put their residents first and make sure they are ready to help if a problem presents itself. SBA won't let old, outdated technology slow down that process, and we won't let them down."