



# USING TECHNOLOGY TO GET TO A NEW DAY

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**T**hey say if you put a frog into a pot of boiling water, it will leap out right away to escape the obvious danger. But, if you place a frog into a kettle of cool water and then gradually heat the water until it starts boiling, the frog will remain unaware of the imminent danger until it is too late and it will be boiled alive. The frog's survival instincts are geared to detect sudden changes.

This parable is often used to illustrate how humans have to be careful in watching slowly changing trends in the environment, not just the sudden changes that force a reaction.

We might use the boiled frog story to illustrate the changes in technology that can automate key business processes in support of the retail services industry. Human nature might encourage any one of us to ignore efforts to automate.

We might justify standing pat by saying that the client isn't asking for it. After all, if it isn't broken, why fix it? And certainly the easiest excuse we might use, "It costs a lot doesn't it?" can make indecision an easy choice to make!

So what might we expect to happen if we keep things very manual and avoid automating our standard business processes as we face the future:

**We may be taken over by the larger companies that offer "value-added" services to the client.**

**We might be lucky just to stay "same-sized" if we lose too many accounts.**

**We might get dropped by a client looking for operational metrics.**

**We're left with little work validation from the field; not knowing for sure whether the field force showed up, were late or on time, or even if they got the job done!**

**We may lose control over all the details that are inherent to the success (or failure) our company's project success, such as who is scheduled; which stores are covered (or not) and what has been completed.**

**The client picks an even smaller**

**merchandising company only to comfort themselves because of the belief that they are keeping their fingers in all "pieces of the pie" (sad truth and downside here is in order for that company to grow and expand services; they lose their edge!)**

On the other hand; let's think a minute about what may happen if I do make changes and look for automation to streamline my management process:

**Sure, there are no guarantees here; but what if you both MEET and EXCEED your clients' expectations based on your expertise, slick administrative tools and ability to deliver things they didn't even ask for. How exciting!**

**Efficiencies you probably can't even imagine; the time savings in basic operating functions if you automate a process that once was manual. Just think of some of the repetitive steps that have burdened you; the hours you save this month will be time saved again next month!**

(cont.)



*Kathy Aldridge of FSA Merchandising, Inc. now saves up to 16 work hours every week from automating the FSA payroll process alone; after engaging customizable hosted software solutions provided by Komtel.*

## Finding a Better Way!

This is a success story. It involves Kathy Aldridge of member company, FSA Merchandising, Inc, of Delafield, WI. It is not a unique story; only too familiar to many NARMS members.

FSA specializes in merchandising services, including resets, new item cut-ins, display building, P.O.P. and distribution audits in the upper Midwest and Great Lakes area. The required efforts by employees and IC's to get the job done are just the beginning. Achieving accountability and having accurate reporting capability are more than a "wish list".

Kathy had looked into building an in-house system on separate occasions with skilled personnel; only to find out that the complexity of engaging the elements of scheduling, payroll and billing along with necessary reporting was beyond what the assigned developer could deliver. Countless hours and considerable dollars later, she still found herself still at square one.

Like many of us, she eventually gave up her desire to be a "guinea pig" in the project and tapped into some time-proven product development with customizable elements. After participating in a reporting-related NARMS membership survey, she was connected with associate member company, Komtel, of Danbury, CT. Initial conversations left her to wonder, but only briefly; as the customizable hosted software solution for managing her retail field services came into focus.

"They've been just wonderful to work with," reports Kathy. "The time savings in automating the payroll process alone is really a life-saver. I now will finally have some time to work on new sales efforts, instead of routinely repeating the process of gathering information from various places and manually working it into relevant reports and constantly rechecking for accuracy."

In the case of FSA Merchandising, the confidence in the data and the interrelationship between the various data sets now gives Kathy new found peace of mind. Importantly, the savings are huge on being able to bill on a bi-weekly basis instead of scrambling to bill every six weeks.

Further, FSA Merchandising has aspirations of continuing the strong growth the company has made over the past couple of years. Kathy and her management partners can now move forward with confidence; knowing that the integrated information can offer a timely picture of everything going on in their vibrant business.

Komtel, the provider of Site Service Manager, was named in 2007 as a NARMS "Preferred Business Partner" in providing customizable hosted software solutions for all aspects of managing retail field services. The SSM program engages all the vital information to streamline operations, access information and enable accountability in both critical project management and reporting processes.

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**Reduce human error.** Alexander Pope said: "To err is human; to forgive, divine!" Repeating mundane exercises is asking for mistakes and mistakes can only lead to corrective actions or mistrust. On and on it goes. In the end you want to be able to trust your own data!

**Streamlining the process can be exciting!** Cut out the duplication of effort. Having a central depository of data allows for a multitude of reporting options and gives you new opportunities for business.

**Work validation. Everyone wins here. No games being played. Honest efforts and reports. After all, the truth is the truth, right?**

**Fast turn-around time in reporting back to the client. No more wondering how you will derive an answer to a probable question or burning the midnight oil just to deliver any answer in attempt to hold your credibility! Think of how impressive you'll be when the answers can be delivered in minutes and maybe even seconds; not hours or days!**

So how do I change the way I've been doing things? We encourage you to explore all the resources available through NARMS International. Tested programs and partnerships exist between NARMS and a range of associate members.

Time and effort has been invested in circulating RFP's that respond to members' declared wants and needs. The results of the arduous process have been declarations of NARMS "Preferred Business Partner" status; often targeted for the entry level user at competitive low cost. Help grow your business through time saving efforts that bring efficiency into your day-to-day business.

No longer do the excuses sound anything but hollow! Don't be the frog in the kettle of warming water, feeling the heat of the competitive workplace! Some things you just can't blame on "global warming"!



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