

Great Clips®

CLIENT

Great Clips/The Hands Group, Inc.

INDUSTRY

Consumer Services

TECHNOLOGIES

G Suite & Chrome Enterprise

BUSINESS NEED

As the business was rapidly expanding, infrastructure began to hold The Hands Group back. Communicating with store managers involved a complicated mix of handwritten paperwork, faxes, emails and phone calls; chasing down accurate, complete information was all in a day's work. These everyday inefficiencies prompted co-owner Tanja Hands to envision a better way.

SOLUTION

With the help of Pythian, all 32 stores were equipped with Chromebooks, G-Suite applications and a cloud-based communications hub. Pythian's guidance, helped simplify their processes, convert cumbersome paperwork to sleek online forms and replace hours of printing, writing and faxing with digital tools that route information automatically.

ILLINOIS SALON FRANCHISE GOES PAPERLESS WITH G-SUITE

ABOUT

Tanja and Dave Hands of The Hands Group, Inc., purchased their first Great Clips franchise in 2006. Over the next 14 years, these savvy business owners have expanded to 32 locations across central Illinois—including an acquisition that added 10 new stores in a single day.

The more they grew, however, the more their infrastructure began to hold them back. Communicating with store managers involved a complicated mix of handwritten paperwork, faxes, emails and phone calls; chasing down accurate, complete information was all in a day's work.

These everyday inefficiencies prompted co-owner Tanja Hands to envision a better way. In late 2018, they equipped their headquarters staff, district managers and all 32 stores with Chromebooks, G-Suite applications and a cloud-based communications hub. With Pythian's guidance, they simplified their processes, converted cumbersome paperwork to sleek online forms and replaced hours of printing, writing and faxing with digital tools that route information automatically. The results have been nothing short of amazing.

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— Tanja Hands, Co-Owner, The Hands Group, Inc.

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RESULT

The Hands Group experienced time savings of at least 50 percent and store managers and staff at headquarters love the new Chromebooks, G-Suite applications and company intranet. In addition, stores now have a powerful, flexible and scalable platform for the future.

OUT WITH THE FAX MACHINE, IN WITH GOOGLE PRODUCTIVITY TOOLS

Business challenges impeding their growth:

- **Inundated by paper.** Store managers relied on inefficient (and often illegible) hard copy forms and faxes to exchange information.
- **Missing information.** Tanja and staff at headquarters spent hours each day deciphering handwriting, tracking down details and re-entering data into spreadsheets and reports.
- **No IT resources.** As a small business, they lacked the internal resources to architect a solution or oversee complicated technology.
- **Unable to scale.** With more than three dozen stores and 200 employees around the state, they needed more effective and secure ways to operate.

Tanja and Dave Hands started out like many small business owners: wearing multiple hats, and developing company procedures as they went along. They quickly discovered that what works for a few locations doesn't always translate when operations expand. With 32 stores and more than 200 employees, Tanja realized they were rapidly outgrowing an infrastructure based on paper.

Their greatest pain point was daily communication between salons around the state and headquarters in Peoria, Illinois. Human resources activities kept them spinning. Everything from new hire paperwork and employee transfers between salons, to expense reports and updates to contact information, required paper. The hum of the fax machine was a constant reminder of their productivity challenges.

Communicating required each salon to locate and print a document, handwrite the required information, then fax it. Some materials, like the new hire packet, tallied more than 25 pages. Version control on documents was nearly impossible without a central repository. Tanja and her staff were frustrated at the time and effort required for even simple tasks.

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“We were using fax machines. The copies were illegible. Oftentimes, they would get routed to the wrong place,” Tanja explained. “It was a lot of time spent having people redo it, or calling back to get information that was left off the first time.”

“It was a bit maddening,” she added.

Technology was the answer. But, having experimented with Windows laptops and free email accounts, Tanja knew they needed a better option. More storage capacity. Greater security. Durable hardware. And all on a small-business budget. They also needed IT expertise to oversee strategy and implementation.

“We were in absolute growth mode. We needed technology to align everything,” Tanja emphasized.

“ Stylists are not paperwork people, so my goal was to make it as simple as humanly possible.”

— Tanja Hands, Co-Owner, The Hands Group, Inc.

THE RIGHT PLATFORM AND PARTNER TO IMPLEMENT THEIR VISION

From the Business Application Research Center, “data governance includes the people, processes, and technologies needed to manage and protect the company’s data assets in order to guarantee generally understandable, correct, complete, trustworthy, secure, and discoverable corporate data.”

Pythian began by conducting a remote workshop with the client to create detailed requirements that would support its analytics initiatives within its complex supply chain.

Right-sized solutions unleashed productivity:

- **Google tools across the business.** They outfitted all 32 store managers, as well as district managers and home office staff, with Google Chromebooks, company email accounts and access to G-Suite applications like Docs, Sheets and Calendar.

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- **Guidance from Pythian.** Once Tanja shared her vision, the Pythian team helped bring it to life with guidance on hardware, applications, security, user permissions and processes. We provided implementation, training and ongoing support.
- **No more paper.** Important documents reside on a cloud-based communications hub as digital forms and Google Docs, with permission-based access for stylists, managers, human resources and owners.
- **Streamlined processes.** Data now flows seamlessly from digital forms to Google Sheets and company systems. Document updates and version control are painless.

The transformation began with a vision from Tanja: Completely paperless workflow. All she needed was the right technical partner and platform to make it happen. It was her children who pointed her to Google, after seeing the Chromebooks provided by their school.

“I needed something fail-proof,” she noted. “My kids came home from school, knocking their little computer all the way; it was indestructible. I thought, if they can do it, my salon managers can do it!”

From there, she connected with Pythian. The team embraced Tanja’s goal and helped quickly move it from idea to reality. In less than a month and for approximately \$1,000 per salon, new Chromebooks, G-Suite tools and a cloud-based communication hub were up and running.

Tanja took the lead in converting paper documents to sleek digital forms, using G-Suite’s intuitive features. She also evaluated and streamlined their overall processes to boost productivity and employee satisfaction.

Pythian then helped organize the content on the company intranet site, set appropriate user access and automate the flow of data from completed forms to Google Sheets and company systems.

“Stylists are not paperwork people,” Tanja noted. “My goal was to make it as simple for them as humanly possible.”

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The day-to-day collaboration and Pythian's ability to simplify even the most complex technical topics made the project flow smoothly.

"[Implementing new technology] is a bit complicated for somebody that doesn't know all the ins and outs," Tanja explained. "Pythian took great care in understanding my business. As a layman, they laid it out simply so that I could answer questions and they could proceed with the setup."

"The Pythian team is really outstanding. They took great care in understanding my business. I couldn't have done it without them."

— Tanja Hands, Co-Owner, The Hands Group, Inc.

RAVE REVIEWS AND A MODEL FOR OTHER FRANCHISEES

Meaningful results achieved:

- **Complete, accurate information—the first time.** With end-to-end digital workflow, every salon regained valuable time. Tanja estimated time savings of at least 50 percent.
- **Rave reviews from staff.** Store managers and staff at headquarters love the new Chromebooks, G-Suite applications and company intranet. With every location using identical equipment and procedures, communication is fast and simple.
- **A model for others.** In the tight-knit Great Clips community, Tanja's achievements are attracting kudos and interest from other franchise owners eager to reduce paperwork in their own salons.
- **Unlimited growth potential.** Best of all, The Hands Group, Inc. now has a powerful, flexible and scalable platform for the future. Tanja and her team can focus on adding stores, hiring staff and overseeing operations, knowing their tech infrastructure is up to the challenge.

Tanja debuted their new Google solution first with district managers and headquarters staff, then personally visited each salon to roll out their digital tools. Only minimal training was needed, thanks to the user-friendly functionality.

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“It has easily saved us 50 percent of our time,” she said.

She added, “Now, I can direct who gets notification—to home office, payroll or HR. There’s no doubt that information is being routed correctly. If something needs to be changed, I don’t have to call and say ‘Throw those old forms away.’ I just change it in 45 seconds, and the next time they pull it up, it’s the one I want them using.”

Salon managers are wholeheartedly on board.

“They sat back and took a big deep breath of relief,” Tanja recalled. “They were so happy. They’ve loved it. Now, by completing four or five questions on a form and hitting ‘submit,’ they get back to the chair to earn tips and cut hair.”

A final, unexpected result has been avid interest in Google tools and digital workflow from other franchise owners in the Great Clips community. Owners from other states have visited The Hands Group, Inc. to see their work up close.

ABOUT PYTHIAN

Founded in 1997, Pythian is a global IT services company that helps organizations transform how they compete and win by helping them turn data into valuable insights, predictions and products. From cloud automation to machine learning, Pythian designs, implements and supports customized solutions to the toughest data challenges.

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“ I tell them, if time is money, call Pythian! You’re going to be able to grow so much more easily, with less headaches.”

— Tanja Hands, Co-Owner, The Hands Group, Inc.
