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Business Profile:
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The Rising Phoenix

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BUSINESS PROFILE:

E-AUTOMATE

Clearly, e-automate has earned its way to the top of the business management software ladder. Sometimes, the good guy gets to win. How has Digital Gateway, the makers of e-automate, risen like the mythical phoenix to produce the management software dealers prefer?

Based on the time I spent with Digital Gateway at its headquarters located at the base of the majestic Wasatch Mountains in Utah, I'd say it boils down to three primary reasons. First, the company really listens to dealers and pays careful attention to their wants and needs. Second, the company has built a robust, intuitive and flexible software package that truly helps dealers measurably improve their business operations. Third, and by no means last in the minds of every employee at Digital Gateway, the company understands that dealers aren't just buying software when they purchase e-automate—they're buying an entire company dedicated to providing dealers with the knowledge and tools needed to run smooth, profitable businesses.



(Sitting) Jim Phillips, CEO
(standing) Darren Jones VP & James Davis, President

their system online, manage point-of-sale activities, automatically collect meter readings from networked office machines, or integrate service call information from laptops and PDAs in the field.

The e-automate system's open architecture and centralized Microsoft SQL server database have made it possible to easily integrate with the industry partners that give dealers a total solution. These include Goldmine, Crystal Reports, Microsoft MapPoint, BEI, Compass, FM Audit, Imaging Portals, Sales Chain, Structured Web, and ADS / EFI's remote technician solutions.

The e-automate software has modules that cover virtually every aspect of a dealer's business. These modules include accounting, sales, service, inventory, purchasing, equipment tracking, contract management, meter reading, e-commerce, and others. Enhanced modules are also available for dealers who need the ability to access



The road to e-automate's current success hasn't been without its challenges. Jim Phillips, CEO of Digital Gateway, has been with the company since its inception a decade ago. He reminisces, "When the dot-com bubble burst and venture capital money dried up, we looked at what we had built and realized it had real value and was worth reinvesting in. So we refocused and rededicated ourselves to creating the solutions that would help dealers gain the control over their business they needed to compete and win in today's marketplace." At that time, Phillips and his business part-



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ner Dave McDougal became the majority partners in Digital Gateway and made the courageous business decision to continue investing in e-automate, an investment that is now over \$10 million. The result is a classic small-business success story.

“I remember our early days when e-automate was being created in the basement of a training company I owned. We had about 20 employees and a handful of customers. We were growing so fast, we had to rent out the space adjacent to us and connect the two buildings with wire piped through a garden hose,” says Phillips.

Now 10 years later, over 600 dealers use e-automate to manage their business. And e-automate’s stellar growth doesn’t show any signs of slowing down. Phillips continues, “This past year, 137 independent dealers joined our existing client base. This growing user base enables us to spread our capital investment ..., which means we can continue delivering new and innovative solutions to dealers at a better price.”

When asked what he attributes the success of e-automate to,

Phillip says, “We owe our success to the dealers. We exist to serve them. The e-automate User’s Group is an independent dealer-driven organization that continues to grow. As it does, the members are becoming more and more vital to driving the future of the product and our company.”

And what advice does Phillips have for dealers looking for business management software? “All we ask of any dealer considering a new software system is to give us a call before making a final decision. Whether you are considering a change or if your company has grown out of your current solution, put us on your short list and invite us to the table. We will put our people,

integration methods, training, support, and software system up against anyone in the industry. Most of the time, when dealers evaluate what we offer and make side-by-side comparisons, they become e-automate users.”

On the technical side, e-automate continues to extend its advantages over competitive offerings. Completely Windows-based from the ground up, e-automate takes full advantage of easy, intuitive Windows views and controls. This helps users quickly learn and understand

how to use the software. The software also uses open architecture based on Microsoft SQL Server, which allows users to easily and quickly get information in and out of the system.

“Some of our competitors are struggling with updating old DOS-based systems” says James Davis, Digital Gateway’s president, who oversees product development. “Legacy systems are very expensive to fix, upgrade, and modernize. They were not designed to function with the current realities of today’s business needs. Just as analog machines are becoming outdated, adding color options, split billing needs, ... and heavier network administration are all straining outdated software solutions.”

What dealers are saying about e-automate

...I truly believe e-automate is superior to the competition due to its ease of use and reporting capabilities. We have gained efficiencies in our administrative functions that have positively impacted our bottom line. I highly recommend that dealers consider partnering with Digital Gateway to successfully manage their businesses. - Jamie Hoffman, CPA, CFO, Offix LC

...Wow! Talk about a smooth conversion. We didn't miss a beat ... within four days it was business as usual. The impact that this software has had on us is astounding. This was truly a great business decision! - Dee Palmer, Controller, Complete Business Systems of Colorado Inc.

...e-automate is the best product on the market today. It's the easiest to learn and integrate into your business, and it's built on the correct technology for the future. - Terry Chapman, Owner, Business Electronics Plus

...We are pleased to report that our conversion from Caltype to e-automate went relatively smoothly. We have found e-automate to be very user-friendly. The CD training has been very good; the online help has been excellent; and the on-site trainer was very knowledgeable. We like the new reporting capabilities, and we're confident our ROI will be significant. - David Akin, Quality Retail Systems

...We are happy that we made the switch. From an accounting point of view, we now have a general ledger system that is "accountant" friendly. The contracts operation appears that it will be a much smoother process. Our IT department is now assured that we will have stable data that is so important to our business. And, our users appreciate the Windows look, feel, and use that they are accustomed to in other modern Windows programs. - Jill Jurevich, CFO, Zoom Imaging Solutions Inc.



BUSINESS PROFILE:

E-AUTOMATE

Though e-automate is now over a decade old, some consider it the new kid on the block. Digital Gateway relishes being viewed in this position. "Being the new kid on the block has enabled us to develop a system that is relevant to the business needs of today. Color, overages, bar codes, mileage, PDA transfers, department integration, warranty returns, credit hold, variable pricing, cost of freight, automatic increases, proposal writing, linked equipment, supply cross references are all part of our foundation," says Davis. "Our technology also better positions us to respond to our dealer's future needs."

The new kid had its start serving small dealers. Now, more large dealers are taking notice. Among those current dealers using e-automate are DEX Imaging, GEI, and Marco to name a few. Phillips is careful to point out they'll never forget their roots. "We owe our success to dealers no matter what their size, and we'll never outgrow them. In fact, many of our first customers were small when they started using e-automate, and now, they have become large or have been acquired by larger dealers. We like to think we played a part in their success."

Working closely with dealers as partners is a mantra among Digital Gateway employees. They know their names and their challenges. They make it their business to come up with the best solutions for their dealers. "We have the discipline to focus our resources on fulfilling our dealer's needs," says Davis. "The e-automate User Group is a perfect example of this. [The members] work hand in hand with our developers to maximize ease of use and provide practical, real-world solutions."

Showing their commitment to helping dealers get the most out of their software, Daron Jones, Digital Gateway vice president, is responsible for its Business Improvement Services division. Jones explains his total commitment to the user. "We know a dealer's business management software is at the heart of his business. When people implement e-automate, it's like heart surgery on their company. We take our responsibility very seriously. We must ensure the implementation goes smoothly and people get trained properly. I make sure dealers are in the hands of a capable surgeon when they choose e-automate. Dealers need to feel safe. Trust is a vital element of the process. We do everything possible to help facilitate a seamless transition to e-automate."

Digital Gateway understands technology and training go hand in hand. Its goal is to train dealers toward independence. They offer customized multiday training including *e-essentials* and *advanced e-essentials* taught on the East and West Coasts. More than a dozen regularly scheduled 60-minute Web-based training classes are offered each month.

Once a dealer adopts e-automate, he has access to a host of advanced modules designed to increase the power and performance of his business. Some of the newest innovations for e-automate include:

Digital Task Force: This module allows users to automate core functions and automatically generate reports when certain important events happen. It allows dealers to have meaningful information reported in realtime for immediate use, including accounting, inventory, service, and sales functions.

e-info: For those dealers interested in having end users enter their own meter reads, buy supplies, and initiate a service call online, e-info gives them that capability.

Digital bar code: This module allows dealers to print and scan bar codes to help them better manage their inventory. The information syncs with e-automate and reports any inventory discrepancies.

Over the past few years, I've closely followed the ascent of e-automate to becoming the top-selling business management software in the digital imaging industry. In my day-long visit, I could sense the company's steadfast dedication to dealers' needs and its unwavering commitment to product excellence. Those dealers who choose to adopt e-automate are in good hands for the future. ♦ by Ronelle Ingram

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