

Southport Technology Group

Verde Energy
Efficiency Experts



Eliminating Manual Workflows

01. Energy Efficiency Today

02. Software's Last Mile

03. Filling the Gap

04. Results

05. Looking Forward

01. Energy Efficiency Today

LED bulb penetration is well below 50% in the domestic market.

The decade since 2010 has seen an incredible transformation in renewable energy globally. At the same time LED bulb awareness has increased, prices have decreased. This has led to a predictable slowdown in energy consumption as it relates to lighting (BloombergNEF 2020 Sustainable Energy in America Factbook). While every indicator points to growth, LED bulb penetration is well below 50% in the domestic market.

Businesses desire energy efficiency and savings. The public sector has a vested interest in sustainability and environmentalism. Verde Energy Efficiency Experts fills the critical business gap between the public-sector and business demand for upgrade know-how. Chicago based, founded in 2010, Verde EEE is a local market leader in LED upgrades for commercial, civic, and community assets. Their work stands out among others that have enabled the preceding decade of energy transformation. They push efficiency in their business and automation in order to ensure that their customers move toward energy efficiency seamlessly, and at the most competitive price.

02. Software's Last Mile

Existing integration solutions were insufficient for estimate creation.

The last mile problem is well known in supply chain management. As understood, the final step in delivery is the most expensive and complicated. The business software equivalent is the myriad of cloud applications available to SMEs. Most platforms cover 80-95% of business demands. Inventory, accounting, customer relationships, these are problems common to the market and are well served by existing solutions. After those workflows are managed, there's always the last mile of unique business process. In sustainable energy, the complexity of the bid process is one kind of last mile.

In late 2018, Verde was in the middle of using two major platforms for technology - Quick Base for project management and HubSpot for sales automation. Existing integration solutions were insufficient for estimate creation. Verde EEE was unable to receive the required fields and the planning attachments in Excel format. Between the two systems, this lack of integration was a deadweight manual workflow. It was a last mile problem: error prone and time consuming.

03. Filling the Gap

Southport Technology Group developed a low-cost, cloud-based engine to connect Quick Base and HubSpot.

In 2018, Southport Technology Group learned the workflow directly from the Verde EEE team members. We were keen to outline possible improvements and file delivery alternatives that would decrease costs. We developed a low-cost, cloud-based engine to connect Quick Base and HubSpot. Infrastructure arrived below the cost of a comparable SaaS alternative. Verde expected to recover their lost labor expenses within six months.

Minding time, we were quick to develop a working proof of concept to check the contours of the requirements as implemented. This lightweight approach differed from software buying. We were quick to get up and running, even before every requirement was 100% clear. With fixed pricing, Verde EEE was reassured, knowing they were not paying heavily for every pre-release trial. This agile methodology served us well, pointing out gaps in understanding and forcing robust, defensive practice on the engineering side.

04. Results

The manual workflow was eliminated and labor costs were recovered within six months.

Verde EEE was able to eliminate this manual workflow at a fraction of the cost possible in an hourly contract. As predicted, the labor costs were recovered within six months. The HubSpot to Quick Base engine served as a launching point for future automation on existing infrastructure. Their infrastructure lowered hurdles to future automation, should they decide to pursue it.

Southport Technology Group developed key competence in Quick Base API development. This work was unexpectedly funneled into a future project with a Colorado-based solar power company. We were very happy with the alignment on cost, time to market, and tradeoffs to make the product effective and well within a reasonable automation budget.

05. Looking Forward

Solving the last mile problem has given Verde EEE an edge over their competition.

In 2015, Microsoft's Satya Nadella predicted that "Every business will become a software business." Verde EEE is a successful business in another part of technology. Verde is also a software business. They have not invented a custom ERP system or created their own robots. Instead, they run on a thousand choices that require software. They are forced to pick and choose best-in-breed options with available training and features for their needs.

Solving the last mile problem is an intangible edge they hold over their competition. It keeps the business lean and focused on the best use of its most important resource: time. Verde EEE's competition has access to the same cloud systems and generic business tools. Operations and efficiency advantages that remove the last-mile problem in automation are rarely found off the shelf.

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