



# Removing Anxieties—Of Every Kind

**Wildlife control company improves customer service while reducing labor costs and increasing efficiency**

**Raccoons in the chimney, squirrels in the attic, even bats in the belfry** ...Bill Dowd has seen it all. As owner of Humane Wildlife Control, Inc. (HWC) in Hamilton, Ontario, Dowd has watched terrified humans cower in the face of small animals, watched said animals ingeniously find their way through a home's nooks and crannies—and he's also watched his business grow.

More than 15 years ago, HWC was a one-man, one-truck shop. "I was it," says Dowd, "but people were really interested in my services, because I remove animals without harming them. Pretty soon I was driving up to five hours to reach potential customers, which meant that I could only see a limited number of them each day."

To keep up with demand, Dowd started hiring technicians in different cities to provide free onsite job estimates, remove animals, and secure structures to prevent future animal invasions. He fielded all customer calls from a central office and contacted each technician every night to go over the next day's assignments, exchanging information about the site's location and particular issue. Recalls Dowd, "I kept a giant job board with magnets for all the different technicians and time slots. Making all those calls and tracking and recording the data took forever. Lead generation, sales opportunities, and higher levels of customer service suffered because of the scramble to keep up with daily operations."

### Growing Pains

Confident that squirrels, bats, etc. were unwelcome in homes throughout North America, Dowd made plans to expand the reach of HWC: "But I knew that I needed the

right systems in place before moving beyond Canada into the United States." Yet he grew frustrated after investing in an expensive custom software system and then one that was originally designed for the air conditioning industry. "Those initial forays into technology were disasters," he remembers.

But Dowd has the guts and determination necessary to corner a desperate raccoon, so he wasn't about to give up on technology. "When I heard that Microsoft had a customizable option, I realized that I could finally put in a system that my staff wouldn't hate me for and that would support business growth," says Dowd.

Working with Integrated Business Intelligence Corporation, a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner, Dowd deployed Microsoft Dynamics™ CRM 3.0 Small Business Edition software, which integrated well with the company's existing systems, including the Windows® Small Business Server 2003 operating system. Dowd says, "I'll admit I tossed and turned for a couple of nights, but after seeing my staff embrace the [Microsoft] CRM solution, I haven't had a second thought since."

### New Efficiencies, New Profits

Today, the magnetic job board is gone. And Dowd has his evenings back because he no longer has to spend them on the phone with technicians. "Each technician pulls down his schedule from home or from his mobile device. The information is all there, including all historical data about previous visits, so the technician doesn't have to spend time hunting—he can go right to the source of



Hamilton, Ontario-based Humane Wildlife Control is Canada's leading urban wildlife control company. With more than 50 employees, the company has solved wildlife conflicts for over 18 years, humanely removing raccoons, squirrels, skunks, birds, bats, mice, and other wildlife from residential and commercial buildings.

***"We're generating business where we've never generated it before."***

*Bill Dowd, President,  
Humane Wildlife Control*

the problem,” explains Dowd. Technicians also immediately enter new information into Microsoft CRM, using mobile devices onsite. As a result, Dowd has been able to phase out three data-entry positions and save about U.S.\$60,000 per year in labor costs. “We’ve not only increased efficiency, but accuracy and accountability as well.”

Plus, technicians no longer have to make frequent trips to the central office to pick up and deliver paperwork, which cuts travel costs by about 80 percent. “Our 60-person staff is dispersed throughout Quebec and Ontario,” says Dowd. “I probably save \$100 per day for each of my 30 technicians in reduced travel time, not to mention the increase in business because technicians spend more time calling on customers than on the road.”

#### **Better Customer Data Management**

Dowd also discovered another way to increase business—HWC now closes 25 percent more sales because it tracks and pursues its open estimates. Before, a technician would visit a potential customer, leave a bid, and hope the customer would call. “We were spending a tremendous amount of time with little return on that investment. It was a real eye-opener when I first ran reports in the [Microsoft] CRM system, and they revealed the hundreds of thousands of dollars that we were leaving on the table,” Dowd acknowledges. “Now, we track every call that comes into the office, documenting all contact and setting alerts to remind us to follow up on leads. We’re generating business where we’ve never generated it before.”

Dowd also now has his call center agents go through the Microsoft CRM system and contact any customers whose accounts are past due. “We had a considerable number of overdue accounts, but as of the last report, we don’t have a single one,” says Dowd. “It used to drive me crazy as a business owner to walk through the call center and see employees at

loose ends, but now when it’s quiet they can pursue leads and receivable accounts.”

#### **Improved Customer Service**

Freed up from past logistical, communication, and technology burdens, Dowd and his senior staff now proactively respond to issues. “Now we can show customers that we’re a professional, reliable company—not a pick-up truck with a trap in the back,” says Dowd. “Technology is even helping with the little things—like letting someone know if we’re running behind—that mean so much to customers.”

With the reporting capabilities of his new system, Dowd set alerts to notify him when urgent matters require his attention. For instance, one Friday afternoon, a customer called, upset with her new roof screen. Within 30 minutes, the company’s top technician was at her home; within one hour, the job was completed to her satisfaction. “I called her to follow up, and she was absolutely astonished by our ability to respond,” says Dowd. “She said that it was unheard of to get such professional, timely service—especially on a Friday afternoon. In the past, it might have taken weeks to resolve the issue. Today, we’re able to provide customer service that exceeds expectations because we have the right tools to support us. If someone took away our systems now, I’d be devastated. Everyone would have to work twice as hard, and productivity and customer service would still suffer significantly.”

In addition to giving Dowd real-time information to respond to urgent needs, reporting capabilities give him the ability to chart growth and plan for expansion. Concludes Dowd, “Microsoft has given me the stable, scalable solution that I’ve wanted for years. It took me 15 years to get 15 trucks on the road—thanks to my new platform, I plan to add 15 trucks in the coming year alone!”

**For more information** about Humane Wildlife Control, visit its Web site at [www.humanewildlifecontrol.com](http://www.humanewildlifecontrol.com).