Secret Order of the Mac

Catch a Rising Star

For talent management agency Madison House, the Mac was a surprise hit.

THE OWNERS OF the Madison House booking agency know a prodigy when they see one. After all, they manage contracts and contact information for hundreds of national artists, such as The String Cheese Incident and Blackalicious, out of their office in Boulder, Colorado. The talent scouts at this 25-person shop discovered a star right under their noses when a new hire brought a Mac into the office.

When Jake Schneider joined Madison House as a booking agent in 2005, he loved everything about his new gig—except the Windows machine he found sitting on his desk. Having long since made the switch to Macs, he hated the thought of going back to Windows-borne bugs, malware, and downtime. "I just couldn't do it," he says.

Not one to tolerate inefficiency, Schneider marched straight into his boss' office and asked his new employer to give him a Mac. The IT department was against it, but he struck a deal: He could use his own Mac if IT didn't have to support it. The key factor in the decision was his assurance that the Mac would work with the office's existing applications. "The partners of the company doubted I could fully integrate into their system," he says. "I proved them wrong."

Schneider installed the Mac version of Microsoft Office, using Excel to track concert data, export it for the Web team, and share it with other companies to set up online ticketing for upcoming events. He set up FileMaker to track artists, bookings, and contracts. He was able to easily share files on the office server. He even connected to the company's archaic Windows mail server.

Ultimately, his experience was so good, he went out on a limb and made a case to the company's partners that he could drastically improve their efficiency by switching to Macs—even offering to make the transition for them personally. To make the process as simple as possible, he asked them to take one small step. "I told them to take all the files and folders that they accessed on a daily basis and put them into a larger folder on their desktops for an easy transfer," he explains.

Schneider purchased three MacBook Pros, one for each partner. He then used Outlook to Mac Mail to move mail from Microsoft Outlook into Apple's Mail.app, and he moved their calendars and address books into Apple's default programs. Everything went without a hitch. The only part that required a little bit of extra tweaking was syncing up the partners' Blackberries. However, programs like PocketMac, Missing Sync, and Blackberry's Desktop Manager filled the gap.

The result? "They loved their new Macbook Pros and became advocates for switching," Schneider reports. After a few months, the partners began buying Macs for their assistants, office managers, even the IT department. In the end, the only staff members still using PCs were accountants. They didn't want to migrate from QuickBooks. Every one of them, however, purchased a Mac for their own personal use. ■

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