

SST Software

Agricultural Software Development & Information Services

YouSendIt Accelerates Tracking & Delivery of Data to Give Agricultural Services Firm Competitive Edge

SST Software

SST Software is an agricultural software development and information services provider with 38 employees and customers in 42 states, eight Canadian provinces, and 22 countries. Its principal offering is FarmRite, a Web-based data management and processing service used by SST's customers, who themselves are service providers to growers. Based on lab results from soil samples, SST creates map books that run from 27 to 500 pages for each farm. SST compiles the map books digitally—each of them consuming as much as 110 megabytes—and furnishes prints-out for clients to use in meetings with growers. The company uploads the map book files to the site of a courier service, where they are printed, bound and shipped overnight. The information generated by SST, in the form of data tables, also is shared via the Internet with SST's customers.

THE PROBLEM

- Hard copies of maps required several days to print and deliver via courier.
- Some geographical areas did not have overnight courier service available.
- Client e-mail systems often accepted attachments only as large as 5 to 10 megabytes. If a customer requested a map book in electronic form, SST would have to send the document in pieces—two or three pages at a time, in separate e-mails.
- Customers were demanding delivery of electronic versions of map books that could be reviewed while waiting for the printing of hard copies.

THE SOLUTION

YouSendIt Corporate Suite

Deployed to six FarmRite staff members, YouSendIt Corporate Suite allows fast, secure and easy uploading and downloading of map books in electronic form, through a drop box on the FarmRite Web site. Efficiency has improved with faster delivery of soil data, and YouSendIt enables staff to track delivery with assurance and ease.



youSENDit™



Situation and Challenges

SST Software, based in Stillwater, Okla., is a privately held agricultural software development and information services provider with 38 employees and customers in 42 states, eight Canadian provinces, and 22 countries. Its principal offering is FarmRite, a Web-based data management and processing service used by SST's customers, who themselves are service providers to growers. These service providers—ranging from chemical companies to universities—gather soil samples from farm fields and send them to labs to be analyzed. Along with the samples, the service providers often gather spatial data from cards in the farmer's combine. The labs then report the nutrient values of the soil to the FarmRite team at SST, who runs those values through sophisticated algorithms to produce a prescription for a variable-rate fertilizer.

For one major chemical company, SST creates map books that run anywhere from 27 to 500 pages, incorporating each farm's topology, soil test results, soil types, acidity, mineral levels, recommended nutrients to be added, and much more data.

SST compiles the map books digitally—each of them consuming as much as 110 megabytes—and makes hard copies available for clients to use in face-to-face meetings with growers. The company uploads the map book files to the site of a courier service, where they are printed, bound and shipped overnight. The information generated by SST, in the form of data tables, also is shared via the Internet with SST's customers through a software tool.

While hard copies of the map books are necessary for SST's clients, they require several days to print and deliver. Some agricultural regions around the country do not have overnight service, which means that client offices in these areas wait two to three days to receive the map books.

"If a customer requested a map book in electronic form, we would have to send it in pieces—two or three pages at a time in separate e-mails—through a compressed Zip folder," recalled FarmRite Sales Manager Chad Greenlee, "because e-mail systems in many locations imposed limits of 5 or 10 megabytes on the attachments they would accept. So we had to break up the documents to be reassembled at the other end, which was very cumbersome and frustrating for both the customer and ourselves."

Responding to demand from a key chemical-company client, Greenlee wanted to find a way to get the maps to his customer immediately after they had been created from the farm field data. This value-added service would give his clients time to review the maps and prepare their recommendations to growers while the map books were still being printed and transported.

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“YouSendIt has never failed us. We’ve never had an upload fail or any problems at all. YouSendIt is very fast and secure, and it has improved our efficiency and tracking capabilities immensely.”

*Chad Greenlee
FarmRite Sales Manager
SST Software*

Solution

In looking for a better solution for delivering map files, Greenlee heard about YouSendIt through word of mouth in the industry. “We found it by necessity,” he said. “I Googled YouSendIt and researched the Web site, then tried it for a month.”

After benefiting from YouSendIt’s fast, secure and easy uploads and downloads over that period, Greenlee registered for YouSendIt Corporate Suite and made it available to six staff members. YouSendIt proved so valuable that SST adopted it as its primary way to deliver electronic files while map books were being printed, sending out digital map books daily in the peak planting and harvesting seasons.

On occasion, the FarmRite team also receives requests from customers for historical data. In those instances, the team will generate map books on that data and simply send them as PDF files through YouSendIt.

Why YouSendIt?

With Corporate Suite, SST was able to add a drop box to its Web site, where its service-company clients and labs could upload their data and where SST could send electronic map books back to the service providers. “Customers send us data files—very large files—that can’t be sent any other way through the Internet. Now they simply click on our drop box and upload their files to us.”

YouSendIt’s branding features also were important to Greenlee. “We love the way YouSendIt allows us to professionally brand our files,” he said. “We can customize the branding to our customer’s liking, as well.”

Greenlee especially likes the tracking capabilities of YouSendIt Corporate Suite. He can monitor file delivery to know the status of files sent to clients. Greenlee’s team can inform clients of when a file was sent and whether the customer responded to the notification to download it.

Greenlee also uses the free YouSendIt plug-in for Microsoft Outlook. “When I send an attachment, I can choose whether to send it through YouSendIt directly from Outlook—a really nice and efficient feature,” he observed.



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Results

YouSendIt has allowed the FarmRite team to accelerate and track delivery of crucial agricultural data, producing a competitive advantage for SST in a number of ways:

- **Value-added customer service:** The delivery of electronic versions of the map books was created specifically as a value-added service, which can serve to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- **Improved efficiency:** With YouSendIt, the FarmRite staff could securely send a large electronic file to clients and make it available to them immediately. Customers could review the data and know they did not need to dig through the hard copies of the map books when they arrived.
- **Assured delivery:** The FarmRite staff uses YouSendIt to verify its customers' receipt of data. "If a customer calls and says they didn't receive notification, we can look into YouSendIt and tell the customer when we sent the file," Greenlee explains. Moreover, FarmRite can be certain that a file has been delivered to the intended recipient. "Our shipping address may be a branch location and the recipient may be gone a couple days at a time," Greenlee said. "Someone else may pick up the package and the customer doesn't receive it. We know with YouSendIt that it was delivered to the right e-mail account; that's really valuable to us."
- **Reliability:** During the busy holiday season, the Web site of the courier service used by the FarmRite team was undergoing maintenance and the team could not upload documents to it. But YouSendIt rescued them. "We called and got the courier service's e-mail address and sent the files to them through YouSendIt," Greenlee said.
- **Improved accuracy:** When its customers were required to piece together a large number of e-mails to create the map books, they sometimes put the pages out of order. With YouSendIt, each map book can be sent in its entirety as a single digital file.
- **Time and cost savings:** The FarmRite staff sends each map book not only to the client's area point person but also to that person's manager. The client teams save time because managers and on-location staff receive the maps electronically at the same time, and FarmRite saves money because it only needs to print a hard copy of the map book for the point person, supplementing it with a digital copy to the manager.

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