# INTELLIGENT TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

# How an Industry-Leading Automotive Dealership Uses Advanced Tech to Scale Their Operations

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements and digital disruption, the ability to adapt and innovate is critical for the sustained success of any organization.

Implementing rapid change can be challenging for long-established companies with legacy architecture. The Niello Company (Niello), who have been in business for over 100 years, found themselves grappling with this situation as outdated systems and infrastructure were hindering their growth potential.

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Niello consistently strives to remain competitive, from its humble beginnings as a Packard, Pierce-Arrow dealer to its current position as a market leader and the longest-owned Porsche dealership in the country. However, the fast-evolving nature of technology posed a formidable challenge, especially when the company's IT infrastructure and cybersecurity had fallen behind the times.

Aware of the pressing need to modernize their systems, Niello's leadership took a bold step by engaging the services of Intelligent Technical Solutions (ITS) - a leading managed service security provider (MSSP).

**In this case study, we explore the business challenges Niello navigated with their systems prior to working with ITS. We will also detail the subsequent partnership experience with ITS. The companies worked together to revamp the Niello technology foundation and improve their cybersecurity to prime the company for sustainability and rapid expansion.**

# 'Cybersecurity is not a fun word to say'

Prior to 2021, Niello managed its technology with an in-house IT department composed of two technicians who took care of day-to-day computing needs. The two technicians eventually left, yet the company's technology requirements continued to grow. It became evident that Niello needed to explore alternative IT management solutions to meet their evolving IT needs.

"Before [ITS] came on board, we were operating [in] reactive firefighter mode. We'd run around as problems arose and put out fires," said Robert Geisner, Niello's IT Manager. And Geisner and the team found themselves supporting older equipment operating beyond its usable lifespan. "The problem is that once tech equipment ages to a certain degree, there are diminishing returns on it. It ends up costing more time and effort than it is worth."

An example of where old equipment caused negative company impact was with corporate networking performance and reliability. Wired and wireless (customer Wi-Fi as well) performance was spotty and it became difficult to identify the source of the issues.

This had a domino effect on the overall productivity and efficiency of the organization and impacted on the client experience. In addition, there was no comprehensive cybersecurity monitoring system that protected the organization's data assets.

"Cybersecurity is not a fun word to say, and it usually irritates people because it requires investment. But when I got here, I noticed that there wasn't a tangible security program in place," Tully Williams, Niello's Fixed Operations Director, said. "Passwords weren't changed on a regular basis. Simple things, right? [But] if someone can hack one person, that can cause some devastation that we would want to avoid."

Niello's reactive approach to technology management puts the company at a significant competitive disadvantage. Recognizing this fact, Niello leadership changed course to implement a comprehensive cybersecurity program that incorporated a security-first mindset. This shift enabled Niello to create a cyber-resilient infrastructure leveraging a layered security approach that includes:

- Security awareness training
- Continuous security monitoring
- Risk assessment analyses
- Regular operating system and application 3rd party patching which lowers overall company risk



Williams continued, "Seriously, cybersecurity is not a fun topic for discussion oftentimes. I want to talk about selling cars and making people happy, but I think people need to understand the seriousness of cybersecurity and make sure they have the right partner that understands the dealership business to help guide them through that."

And that is why he immediately called ITS for help.

# 'We get answers to our questions now'

Partnering with ITS provides Niello with access to a team of IT professionals with expertise in the automotive industry, along with cybersecurity and cloud domain specialties.

Matt Ryan, Niello's Director of Operations, expressed his appreciation for ITS' excellent response time, "We may not have the solution right away, but we know what the problem is, and we work together to make it happen... and this has really empowered our IT team."

Being able to leverage the wide-ranging knowledge of the ITS team is a boon for the Niello team.

"And here's the best thing... I don't see many interruptions to workflow. That's the goal of a high-level IT department—that they stay out of our way and empower us to keep our clients happy and help the company grow. That's a great compliment," Williams said.

ITS performed an initial discovery to identify gaps and created a comprehensive plan with prioritization. Niello improved its cybersecurity protections, and now has a partner that helps mentor the internal IT team.

"[ITS] put things in place that are going to make [everything] safer for us. And then, as the end-user, we really don't see anything changed—that is the biggest win ever," Williams added.

# 'ITS made people comfortable contacting IT'

Partnering with ITS proved to be a game-changer for Niello, as it allowed team members to regain valuable time and focus on their core business operations.

Since adopting a proactive management model that allows them to manage their IT devices more efficiently and to leverage automation technologies, Geisner and his team can thoughtfully plan for technology investments and replacement with a more holistic hardware lifecycle. Continuous monitoring of IT assets also alerts the team in real-time to abnormal usage or application behavior.

"We can focus on making sure that there's a really good solid baseline, and that lets us work more on the interactions that we have with our employees and providing them with a stellar customer support experience," Geisner said.

With the Niello IT team being able to reclaim some of their time through these back-end improvements, they have been able to proactively listen to employee feedback. "Being able to [get] encouraging feedback from our employees also lets us know that they feel comfortable working with us and are having a positive experience. That is gratifying to us. And that's what I always wanted to focus on, making people comfortable contacting IT. [It's like saying], 'We're here to help you. We want to make sure that you can do your job and you don't have to worry about malfunctioning equipment slowing you down'," Geisner said.

# 'Getting IT service tickets is easier'



"The process of tracking and managing IT support tickets was crucial, and I think that ITS helped in getting that dialed in," Williams expressed. "Our IT people didn't have any training, and I'm not going to blame them for that. But when you don't know how to do something, and you're trying to help people out, it is a [tricky thing to do]."

Thus, ITS implemented a streamlined ticketing system that has made submitting and resolving IT tickets incredibly easy for the IT team and end users.

ITS provided a user-friendly interface where employees could generate a support ticket easily, select the appropriate category for their issue, and clearly describe the problem. This ticketing system ensured that all necessary information was captured upfront, reducing the frustrating back-and-forth communication often associated with resolving IT issues.

The system also promptly acknowledged and assigned tickets to the appropriate support personnel, ensuring that employees received timely updates and resolutions. This simplified and efficient ticketing process alleviated frustration and enabled employees to seek solutions quickly and effectively for their IT-related concerns.

"Now, our team has resources to help support our end users. And what we've heard [from] all our 650 employees are that now, if we don't know how to resolve a problem, our IT has all the tools at their disposal to solve problems and bring value to the organization.  To me, that is one of the biggest things [ITS] has done for us is with end-user support. Because a lot of the things [they] do are behind the scenes," Williams shared.

# 'ITS boosted our IT department's morale'

Ryan admitted that prior to the partnership with ITS, their IT department's morale wasn't the best. "It wasn't terrible, but it wasn't great, either."

With ITS in the fold, the Niello IT team was relieved of the burden of manual tasks and was introduced to modern technologies that provided career upskilling opportunities. This has enabled the IT team members to focus on more strategic initiatives and professional development.

"ITS came in with grace and not with guns blazing. They coached and mentored, partnering with our internal IT team and provided guidance for their development," Williams shared.

ITS' recognition of the IT team's skills and contributions and their proactive involvement in decision-making processes created a sense of empowerment and value. As a result, the IT team felt motivated, appreciated, and enthusiastic about their work, leading to improved morale, increased job satisfaction, and a greater sense of camaraderie.

"If I have questions, I know I can always reach out to ITS," Geisner said, recalling the times he contacted ITS for assistance. "I have, on many occasions, just gone ahead and either texted or emailed [them] directly with questions like, 'Hey, I've run into this problem... What's your take on it? What are the pros and cons?"

As the leader of the pack, Geisner said that having the ITS team to rely on and escalate to has helped the Niello IT team expand their knowledge and skills at a rapid rate.

"The knowledge and guidance that [ITS] brings to the table has helped us out in navigating certain projects and challenges with vendors. That's something I think we wouldn't have really thought about unless we brought in a consultant. Thankfully, [ITS] is there providing that guidance and mentorship," Geisner said.

He also mentioned that having more than one person with multiple technology perspectives instead of just one tech puts his mind at ease.

"Knowing that if something does happen, like if I want to go on vacation or something unexpected occurs, I don't really have to worry about things not being taken care of [because] ITS is there to jump in as needed."

# 'Our experience with ITS has only been positive'

"I don't think people understand how important a robust cybersecurity program is for a business," Williams said. "When you're talking about something that is so critical that it can negatively affect your company and shut you down tomorrow, you need a security partner that:

1. Has auto dealership experience. For me, that's the holy grail here... We're not just a typical store like a retail outlet or even a business office... So, [the MSSP] must be flexible and understand the automotive business.
2. Knows how to listen and reinforces how important [cybersecurity] is. I think the calmness of [ITS] coming in and telling us what we really need to be protective of in a clear, precise way—and not overreacting or underrating is the number two best thing."



And both characteristics, according to Williams, make ITS the perfect MSSP for Niello.

"I felt great about our relationship when we started it in 2021, and I feel even better about it now," Ryan shared.

He continued, "The number of resources that ITS brings to the table, the knowledgeable support that we get from ITS team members, is fantastic. It's been an incredibly positive experience.

We resonate with each other. I think [our Core Values] align with ITS. And so, I think it was just instant harmony. I believe our two companies do the right thing, so it was an immediate hand-in-glove, and we haven't looked back since."