

Royster-Clark Success Story

Web Hosting | Internet Access | Partner Programs | Security | Services

Customer	Royster-Clark
Problem	Reliable Hosting & Connectivity
Solution	Verio Shared Hosting & Network Services

Farming the Web with Verio – Royster-Clark Harvests the Benefits of the Internet

Customer Profile

Royster-Clark, established in 1872, is a leading supplier of fertilizers, seeds and crop protection products.

The Situation: Replanting the Field

As a major player in the agricultural retail business for 130 years, Royster-Clark continues to set the standard

for quality products, technological advances, genuine value and environmental stewardship. The company is

big enough to handle the largest of accounts, and small enough to be attentive to the needs of individual customers. Royster-Clark boasts:

- More than 300 Farmmarkets® retail locations in some of the best farming regions of the country
- Partnerships with the most innovative vendors in the business
- High-capacity seed storage facilities to protect the company's high quality genetics

Although Royster-Clark had made a name for itself as an agricultural retailer, the company was lagging when it came to the corporate Web site.

"It was a great Web site for 1995, but by the time 2002 came around, it really needed a face lift. It just didn't do much – there was no movement, no presence for individual retail locations, and the company was not taking advantage of the Web site as a communications channel," said Robert Paarlberg, managing director of IT for Royster-Clark.

The IT team set to work on a major refresh and redesign of the corporate Web site.

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One of the team's first tasks was to create templates that could be used to generate a presence on the Web for each of the 300 Royster-Clark retail locations across the eastern half of the United States. Content management software allows dedicated Web authors to design unique pages for retail locations — each with personalized features such as driving directions, contact information and a community calendar to name a few.

Other features added to the site include:

- **Ask the Agronomist.** An online forum enables visitors to seek advice from Royster-Clark's resident agronomist, browse through previously submitted questions or access publications on relevant topics.
- **Weather, Market and News.** Reports are tailored to meet the needs of Royster-Clark customers, providing real-time information on the current conditions and other information critical to the industry.
- **Market Insight.** A daily commentary on the commodity markets is included.
- **VigoroSeeds.com.** A Royster-Clark-branded site provides details on its own Vigoro brand of premium seed. The site features the ability to customize information by zip code and tools designed to give growers the detailed information they are seeking.

The Solution: Reaping Results

To maintain the corporate Web site throughout the overhaul, Royster-Clark relied on Verio for its Web hosting and high-performance bandwidth requirements. It was critical to the Royster-Clark team that the site perform flawlessly during the relaunch and moving forward, and a provider with guaranteed reliability and a tier one network was at the top of the list.

Since the redesign, Royster-Clark has seen site traffic increase exponentially, with impressive performance. The Royster-Clark Web site overall is recording 35,000 hits per week, with visitors staying on the site an average of 20 minutes per visit, a substantial increase that gives the company additional "stickiness" with its customers' visits. The company's VigoroSeeds.com has alone seen site traffic increase from 2,000 hits per week in December of 2002, to 8,000 hits per week in January of 2003.

Royster-Clark has depended on Verio for Web connectivity for three years, and shortly after the relationship began, it grew to include Verio's shared Web hosting as well. The company relied on Verio's previous track record of performance and availability as it was making decisions about the relaunch.

"The Web site is our face to customers, vendors and the world," said Paarlberg. "We need to ensure that it's going to perform flawlessly, and the idea of saving a few cents in exchange for this peace of mind is simply not good business. We never considered it an option."

"Not only are more and more of our 50,000 customer base discovering our newly-revamped Web site, they have grown accustomed to visiting the site for weather and news and other critical information."

"We expect to see another dramatic increase in site traffic during the mid-March timeframe," said Julie Schottel, Web systems manager for Royster-Clark. "Not only are more and more of our 50,000 customer base discovering our newly-revamped Web site, they have grown accustomed to visiting the site for weather and news and other critical farming information. Not to mention, the growing season begins around that time — Royster-Clark is counting on Verio to get us through that demanding busy season."

The Future: Planting the Seeds For Growth

The next phase of the Royster-Clark Web site revamp will include the integration of an ERP solution. The company would like to enable its customers to manage purchase orders via the corporate Web site, as well as allocation. An electronic bill payment system will enable customers to view statements online and make payments online.

As Royster-Clark continues to expand its business and its online offerings and services to its highly-valued customers, it will continue working with Verio to provide dependable, scalable services.

About Royster-Clark Inc.

Royster-Clark, under the command of Francis Jenkins and Ken Moshenek, has served the agricultural community for well over 130 years. The company, with corporate offices in New York, N.Y.; Norfolk, Va.; and Collinsville Ill.; is a leading supplier of fertilizers, seeds and crop protection products to customers throughout the eastern half of the nation with more than 300 retail outlets and numerous production and distribution points serving agriculture.
www.roysterclark.com