



## CASE STUDY: NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

The Accounting Aid Society was founded 51 years ago in the City of Detroit by a group of CPAs who wanted to take advantage of a program offered by the IRS that helped low and moderate-income households get their taxes done. It became part of what is called the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program, or VITA, and is now one of the top programs in the country. It is one of the most well-known by the IRS and serves thousands of people in the four-county area of Metro Detroit.

### BACKGROUND

Priscilla Perkins is a Detroit transplant who has been working in fundraising for many years. She is the CEO of Accounting Aid Society and has always wanted to lead a nonprofit that serviced working people because of her parents and the legacy they left for her...two working parents, low to moderate income, who managed to put four kids through college and own their own home. She says that it was not easy, but she is very proud of what they've been able to leave in terms of their legacy. She is from Louisiana originally and has a BS and MBA from LSU. She has always worked in nonprofits, particularly in the past 15 years. She began her career in the public accounting firm sector as a management consultant. She comes to this work motivated by a desire to serve. Servant leadership is what she hopes to leave as her legacy and wants to provide mentorship for young people in the accounting profession which will serve to build their resumes in a way that she hopes will create some opportunity for them to become servant leaders in the future.

### THE DECISION

When she came on board at The Accounting Aid Society, she says that there were three priorities and one of them was to engage a cybersecurity company in the first eight months of her tenure. She says: "I was determined to do it because I realized the population we deal with has low trust of the system and the last thing I'd ever want to have happen is them thinking the association of someone that does taxes for the community is a victim of a ransomware or cyber-attack where the most private and secure information is being made available out on a dark web or sold for nefarious purposes." So, I felt this was exceptionally



*Priscilla* says that she thought a cyber-security implementation would be difficult and technical. But with SensCy, it wasn't." She adds: "They made it simple for us."

important and went to the Michigan Nonprofit Association for help. She told the Association that she was a nonprofit, her budget was small, but her organization really needed to invest in cybersecurity. It was mandated by her board and she felt for the sake of their reputation that they needed to be sure that they were taking every single opportunity to be safe in the cyber world. At the peak of tax season, the Accounting Aid Society has 22 unique sites. They have employees working remotely, but most importantly Priscilla wanted to be sure that their systems were secure and their people were well-trained. The Michigan Nonprofit Association recommended SensCy. She asked for a proposal and she says: “We loved their approach, what they had to say, and their price too.”

## THE IMPLEMENTATION

Priscilla states that when the effort began, her SensCy score was about 600, but the score has now grown to over 800. That helps her sleep better at night. She says: “It’s an upward slope and I like upward slopes.” She says that they have only been a customer, at this point, for six months and that the incredible jump in their score is heartwarming.

She adds: “I think it’s just the open lines of communication that SensCy has enabled. They are truly customer service focused, and I feel like if there’s any question we have or any insecurity we have, we know who our team members are that we can reach out to. They keep in constant contact with us. So even though I always worry that as a tiny little nonprofit and we are dealing with companies particularly contractually that we might be kind of an afterthought for. I don’t feel that way with SensCy. I really feel that they stay on top of things. They help us. They’re accessible and everything we’ve needed and everything they’ve promised, they’ve been able to deliver. So, for me, it’s not even anything I really find myself worrying about as much as I did my first few months here. I knew the board was concerned about it, and we are always concerned about our brand and reputation, but this makes it easy. Our culture of service and SensCy’s culture of service is a perfect match.”

She goes on to say: “I think helping the staff understand cyber issues like phishing is very important. While I’m a target because of the whaling, our other staff are targets too and they are people in our call center who don’t have a lot of sophistication when it comes to coding or programming, but to be able to know that every level of the organization, no matter what your skillset or skill level is, SensCy presents the information in a way you can understand and take in and know, “Oh, that’s what I need to be doing,” and what I have received from people is more inquiry, “Is this a phishing email? I think this is a phishing email.”

Priscilla goes on to comment on the tremendous value that SensCy provides. When she looked at alternatives, she says that most other organizations were charging 2.5 times the price for a lesser service. She says that the relationship with her vendors is important to her and that she instantly developed a great relationship with the people at SensCy.

Priscilla says that she would clearly recommend SensCy to other organizations. She says: “They speak to you at a level you can understand. They meet you where you are. Their dashboard is an incredible way to communicate and engage. You always know where you are, I think overall, it’s the value for what you get, particularly if it’s in a nonprofit space. We are at such a disadvantage with our budgets that I feel you get very competent individuals, personable, professional, at a very, very competitive price point and that they’re accessible and they communicate well. They are a perfect fit for a small to medium-sized organization.”

