Manufacturing Firm Virtualizes Servers; Buys Time with Legacy Systems

The Background

Elizabeth Carbide Die Co. Inc., world headquarters for Elizabeth, was founded by Melvin B. Peterson in Elizabeth Township, a suburb outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Starting as a six man shop in 1954, Elizabeth Carbide introduced the use of carbide punches and dies to the pharmaceutical industry in the United States, establishing themselves as innovators in the compression tooling industry, a quality the company still strives for today. The family of Elizabeth companies has grown to become one of the world's leading manufacturers of tablet tooling, tableting presses, blister pack tooling, turrets and press parts in the pharmaceutical industry. The company also serves a diverse group of industries including oil & natural gas services, hot forge tooling, battery, chemical catalysts, nuclear fuels, propellants, electronics, and confectionery industries.

The Challenge

Information Systems Manager Alan Santory needed help. As the sole in-house IT professional, Santory had been outsourcing IT projects and general IT support to a third-party vendor. However, over time, it became clear to Santory that the vendor could no longer grow with Elizabeth's expansion into new technologies.

Additionally, Elizabeth's legacy servers were in danger of failing and the firm's disaster recovery appliance was no longer able to virtualize the number of servers Elizabeth would need to restore in the event of a disaster. "Our disaster recovery appliance was an all-in-one box to handle server back ups every 15 minutes. So if a server failed, we were supposed to be able to virtualize the server and run a virtual server through the appliance. In theory, it all sounded great and the backup part seemed to work, but it became apparent that the one box would never be able to virtualize our 20 servers," says Santory.

The Solution

Knowing he needed additional expertise to address these issues and more, Santory brought in Nortec to review their current infrastructure and to provide enterprise architecture consulting.

> "Fortunately Nortec is highly competent, very responsive and extremely detailed in their approach and thorough during implementation.""

After reviewing Elizabeth's current systems, hearing their pain points and understanding their business requirements and objectives, Notec proposed and implemented a comprehensive solution which encompassed virtualization, SANs, replication, dual, mutually exclusive backup strategies which augment each other, and switching and routing. Equally important, Nortec's solution focused on processes and how IT management efforts could be reduced by way automating, organizing and streamlining specific areas. These areas included, but were not limited to, patch management, firewalling, Anti-Spam, remote access, file and folder structure, NTFS and SMB permissions, Microsoft SQL Server maintenance and performance tuning, AD DS and scripting. Elizabeth needed to do some work to prepare both plants for virtualization. "I relied heavily on Nortec for support because this is a new approach for us," says Santory. "Fortunately Nortec is highly competent, very responsive and extremely

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Server virtualization has given Elizabeth the ability to continue indefinitely with its old servers without concern about hardware failure. The firm now has the time it needs to plan - and budget - for further migration. Disaster Recovery is also on solid footing - if disaster strikes, Santory is able to activate a replica virtual server and Elizabeth can conduct business at a secondary, safe location.

The Benefits

An immediate benefit for the company is increased efficiency and cost management. "We're utilizing our resources so much more efficiently," says Santory. "We're not overbuying equipment we don't need and we're using just enough resources to power what we needed." Virtualization also provides efficiencies for Santory as he's able to manage IT operations from a central location as well as remotely.

Additionally, virtualization has helped with IT audits in ensuring the firm has covered all critical areas. Santory also has more confidence in the disaster recovery plan. "It's now much faster to get back up and running – I can restore systems in a matter of minutes."

For more information on Nortec, please contact us at georgeh@nortec.com.

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