

Leighton Broadcasting is a collection of 40 radio stations, and much more. At first glance, their name would suggest a sole focus on broadcasting, but in reality, Leighton is an interactive design and marketing company who happens to own 40 broadcasting locations. Leighton Broadcasting is really a diverse company dedicated to serving numerous industries across all of Minnesota, Eastern North Dakota, and Green Bay Wisconsin.

In addition to radio stations, Leighton Broadcasting owns a number of sister companies which allow them to provide full-service marketing, promotions, and interactive designs to companies throughout their coverage areas. With a full plate, Leighton needed to ditch their legacy systems and their stations down time which impacted their revenue potential. As budgets tightened, all options were on the table, even ideas once thought impossible were opened for consideration. Implementing a once 'impossible' solution is exactly what Leighton Broadcasting and NetVPro accomplished.

Aging equipment saddled Leighton Broadcasting with limitations and costly repairs. Their radio automation software had been built to run on a hardware platform that gave them no redundancy, no expandability, and a high operating cost. The software required propriety hardware components which meant dedicated resources to run. Leighton wanted to virtualize their radio automation software systems, which the broadcast software vendor said could not be done. Up to this point, their admin services, file shares, accounting services and other common systems shared by all groups within Leighton Broadcasting had already been virtualized. Converting these systems had worked well, so the question became why couldn't this be done with their on-air systems as well? Using the recently virtualized infrastructure, NetVPro and Leighton worked to perform the impossible. Using the right technology and internal skillsets NetVPro and Leighton Broadcasting proved the experts wrong as the first radio automation system project was completed.

NetVPro was founded in 2010 by Paul Berndt in Saint Cloud Minnesota. NetVPro works with businesses large and small, featuring the depth to provide enterprise-class technology services. With a strong presence in the system virtualization arena, large storage systems and Disaster Recovery, NetVPro is a trusted IT partner to businesses of all sizes. The last few years have seen tremendous growth for Net V Pro, more than tripling in staff and acquiring additional datacenters to house data securely in a lone source, or across multiple sites for enterprise disaster recovery capabilities.

About 4 years ago, Leighton Broadcasting brought in NetVPro to help with their networking needs between radio stations. Having the ability to connect all their different business groups together helped to make common resources available and reduced overhead operating costs.

By reducing the number of servers needed to operate their radio automation software, they were able to integrate 2 physical cards into one server. By taking advantage of I/O sharing services in a virtualized environment, both cards became visible to all nodes within the system. Because it is now in a virtualized environment, if a physical server fails, the virtual server(s) are instantly moved to another set of resources, reducing down time from the previous 8-20 hours to mere seconds. Costs for the 3-node configuration are now reduced to half the previous cost, plus providing n+1 redundancy in their on-air automation systems. Further benefits include reduced operating costs, reduced power consumption, lower cooling costs, less annual hardware maintenance, smaller footprint in their server room and lowered dependency on technical resources.

After the success of converting the first system into the virtualized environment, Leighton Broadcast will move forward, with the help of NetVPro, to virtualize their entire on-air automation system for all 40 radio stations. They are also planning to bring online a high availability cluster which will make downtime for their on-air services a thing of the past.

"Over the years, NetVPro has become our IT solutions provider for everything within Leighton Broadcasting", says Tony Abfalter Director of Engineering/ IT.

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