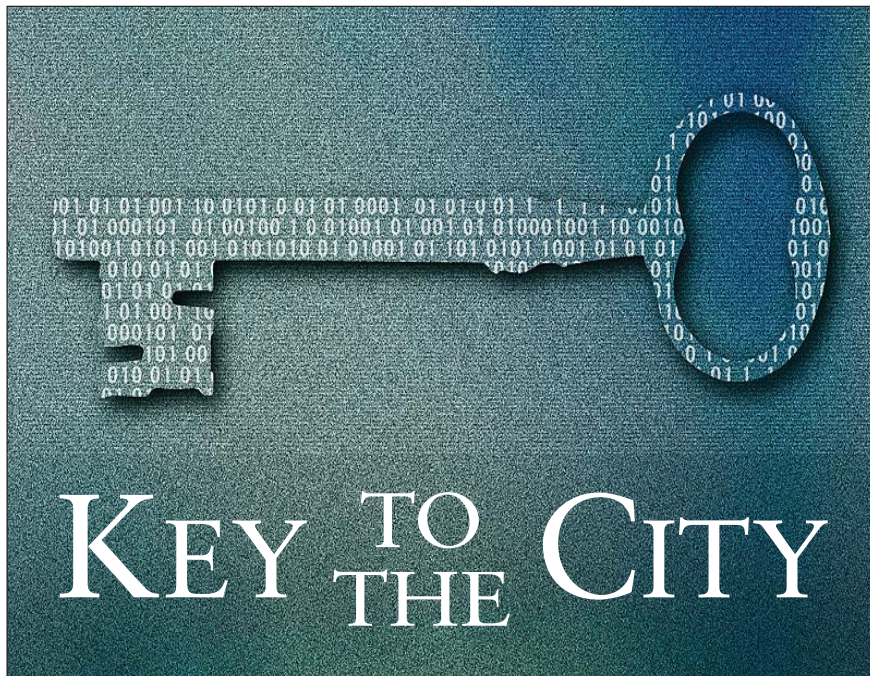


VERTEKS CONNECTION



SUMMER 2008



The City of Mt. Dora trusts Verteks for comprehensive IT planning, implementation and support services.

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Technology has changed dramatically the way local governments operate. Like any business, local governments utilize technology to operate more efficiently and cost-effectively. And, as more and more citizen-customers become accustomed to communicating and doing business online, local governments must keep up-to-speed with private sector counterparts.

That said, local governments face many of the same constraints as businesses when it comes to planning, deploying and managing technology, along with a wide array of regulatory requirements. The City of Mt. Dora, Fla., has a four-person IT staff that must support nearly 200 end-users and a wide-area network serving nine facilities. To help fill any gaps, the city turns to Verteks Consulting.

“We rely heavily on the Verteks staff for advice and support,” said Johnna Shamblin, IT Manager for the City of Mt. Dora. “We turn to them for help with just about everything we do here, from network management, to desktop management, to applications. Many times we just get them on the phone and they give us 10 to 15 minutes out of their day to be a sounding board. Things like that are invaluable.”

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The Verteks Difference

Shamblin found Verteks when she began searching for a vendor to support the city's Voice over IP (VoIP) phone system. Headquartered in nearby Ocala, Fla., Verteks has extensive experience in IP telephony solutions, and the customer-focused approach Shamblin was looking for.

"Seven or eight years ago we moved to a 3Com VoIP solution, which we purchased from a different vendor. Before long, most of that vendor's technicians had left the company, and I lost confidence in them as a partner. So I went on a search for a vendor who could provide the kind of support we needed," she said.

"After interviewing a couple of different 3Com support providers, I came across Verteks. I toured their facilities and met with their staff and quickly decided that they were the type of company we wanted to do business with. They've been supporting our phone system ever since."

When Shamblin first began working with Verteks, Network Administrator Mike Andrews had not yet joined the city's IT team. Verteks handled several server upgrades, made network switch recommendations and helped troubleshoot fiber connectivity problems. Now Andrews handles many of those kinds of projects, but the city still relies on Verteks for advice and hands-on support.

"The ability to handle deployments and troubleshoot problems is, of course, very important. But what sets Verteks apart is their willingness to help. I can call them and say, 'Hey, I'm thinking about doing this, what do you think?' And they'll take the time to share their ideas and what they've learned on similar projects," Andrews said. "A lot of vendors will rush to get you off the phone, then send you an invoice. Verteks has a completely different attitude."

A Matter of Trust

Verteks has helped the City of Mt. Dora boost its network security through state-of-the-art firewall and anti-virus solutions. Verteks has deployed four WatchGuard firewalls for the city, including one for the network core, one for the WiFi network in City Hall, one for the public works telemetry system and one for the police department's connection to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement system. The network core firewall features WatchGuard's robust unified threat management technology, which combines a powerful application proxy firewall, VPN, intrusion prevention and more in a comprehensive and easy-to-manage security solution.

Verteks also implemented a Trend Micro solution for server and desktop malware protection.

"We had been using a different vendor for anti-virus and were having a

lot of problems," said Andrews. "Verteks had run across the same thing with other clients and recommended Trend Micro as a solution. We take Verteks' recommendations seriously. When we looked at Trend Micro we knew immediately that it was the way to go."

"Both of these solutions have been wonderful. They solved a number of problems for us, and are easy to manage and effective," said Shamblin.

Like most local governments, the City of Mt. Dora relies on IT for its day-to-day operations. The city must also keep pace with technology changes to ensure that its network infrastructure continues to improve efficiency, meet regulatory requirements and provide accessible and cost-effective services to the public. The city trusts Verteks Consulting for sound advice, expert support and top-notch customer service.

"We've been using Verteks' services for six or seven years, and I just can't say enough good about their service. They do network support and support our phone system. They make recommendations and implement solutions for us. They've never steered us wrong," Shamblin said. "And I always know that no matter what the situation or what time of day it is, Verteks is there for us. I have complete confidence that I can pick up the phone, call them, and they will take care of whatever it is we need."



Verteks Consulting is pleased to be a Silver Sponsor for the 2008 FLGISA Annual Conference. Verteks Consulting is a market leader in Central Florida, providing telecommunications systems, computer networks and technology support services to business and government agencies. Verteks Consulting is also a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and a State of Florida Approved Vendor. For agencies purchasing from State of Florida Contracts, Verteks Consulting is listed on the 3Com State of Florida contract for all voice and data products.

Botnet Linked to Prescription Spammers

Researchers have identified a link between originators of malware, such as the Storm botnet, and illegal pharmaceutical supply chain businesses that recruit the botnets to send spam promoting Viagra and many other prescription drugs on their Web sites.

"Our research has revealed a smoking gun that shows that Storm and other botnet spam generates commissionable orders, which are then fulfilled by the supply chains, generating revenue in excess of \$150 million per year," said Patrick Peterson, vice president of technology at IronPort, the e-mail security unit of Cisco Systems.

IronPort's research revealed that more than 80 percent of Storm botnet spam advertises online pharmacy brands. This spam is sent by millions of consumers' personal computers, which have been infected by the Storm worm via a multitude of sophisticated social engineering tricks and Web-based exploits. Further investigation revealed that spam templates, "spamverized" URLs, Web site designs, credit card processing, product fulfillment and customer support were being provided by a Russian criminal organization that operates in conjunction with Storm.

Study: IM Boosts Productivity

Rather than distracting workers, a new study shows that instant messaging actually helps them focus. Sending IMs cuts down on diversions, the report says, by eliminating idle chatter and allowing colleagues to check if the other person is busy before bothering them in person.

The study by researchers at Ohio State University and University of California, Irvine, challenges the widespread belief that instant messaging leads to an increase in disruption. Instead, research showed that IM was often used as a substitute for other, more disruptive forms of communication such as the telephone, e-mail, and face-to-face conversations. Using instant messaging led to more conversations on the computer, but the conversations were briefer, said R. Kelly Garrett, co-author of the study and assistant professor of communication at Ohio State.

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Seeing Is Believing

IP-based videoconferencing solutions can improve collaboration, increase efficiency, save money and facilitate 'green' initiatives.

Videoconferencing solutions are fast moving beyond the confines of the boardroom to emerge as a collaboration tool empowering the workforce. According to high-tech market research firm In-Stat, the driving factors behind increased adoption and use of videoconferencing are technology, bandwidth and convergence. As organizations become more comfortable with voice and data convergence, they're finding that video is a logical next step.

"The shift to an IP environment that enables unified communications, presence and mobile integration provides a technological environment where traditional videoconferencing, as well as telepresence, can become synergistic elements," said In-Stat Analyst David Lemelin.

The latest media-rich productivity tools are also boosting the prospects for videoconferencing. According to a recent In-Stat survey of U.S. businesses, the decision to use or not use videoconferencing is no longer based on uncertainty over the quality of the experience, among those who have tried it lately. Furthermore, cost alone does not seem to hinder adoption or use. Current users of videoconferencing are generally satisfied with their systems and find value in the experience. Past users are willing to reconsider videoconferencing if the quality, usability and cost are reasonable.

Eye on Efficiency

Mobility has become a key driver in the adoption of videoconferencing. As workgroups become geographically dispersed, video can help increase productivity by improving real-time collaboration. Videoconferencing is proven to cut travel costs and associated downtime, improve decision making, increase productivity, enhance customer service and reduce time to market of new products and services.

This benefit is more pronounced when it comes to managing distributed project teams. Ad hoc, face-to-face meetings speed the product development process, increasing revenue while reducing development costs. In many industries, shorter time to market can have a dramatic impact on market share and profit potential.

On-demand videoconferencing can improve organizational efficiency significantly — even among workers in the same facility. By integrating video into the workflow process, videoconferencing has the potential to change the communications paradigm just as e-mail and instant messaging have. Collaboration moves away from the scheduled, conference room environment to the unscheduled desktop environment. When face-to-face interaction with clients is needed, videoconferencing can provide that personal touch without the need for business travel.

Videoconferencing solutions are further enhanced by real-time collabo-



ration technologies that support file, screen and application sharing, chatting and electronic whiteboarding. The H.239 standard, which enables the delivery of data alongside a videoconference, makes it simple for users to view the presenter and the presentation at the same time. Having a collaboration session via an H.239 videoconference enables distributed teams to share PC-based documents while also enjoying visual communications.

Seeing Green

Many organizations are launching green initiatives, both out of concern for the environment and to create a positive reputation within the community. According to research by Ipsos MORI, about four in five U.S. workers would prefer to work for an organization with a positive environmental reputation. Forty-two percent of U.S. respondents are more likely to purchase

goods and services from such a company. When corporations support the demand for environmental responsibility, they will be rewarded and the overall impact is much greater.

Video conferencing is beginning to resonate as a part of organizations' commitments to environmental issues, according to In-Stat. By cutting air and auto travel, videoconferencing can reduce an organization's CO₂ "footprint" substantially.

At the same time, videoconferencing improves job satisfaction by reducing stressful business travel and enabling telecommuting — workers can live where they want to live. Videoconferencing also enhances the recruiting process by enabling organizations to quickly and cheaply interview more people from more locations.

From the Ground Up

A successful videoconferencing strategy starts with a total solution platform that supports the organization's performance and management requirements while seamlessly integrating with the network infrastructure. Once the platform is in place, specific features can be added as needed, or as new technologies become available. The solution-based approach meets today's requirements while providing investment protection. It also ensures that the system will be scalable, reliable and manageable, and deliver a clear return on investment.

A unified videoconferencing platform also makes it easier to connect with people outside of the company, enabling organizations to seamlessly

extend the benefits of video to suppliers, partners and customers. Centralized management, deployment and scheduling, as well as integration with existing applications, further boost ROI.

Videoconferencing will never totally replace in-person communications. However, the latest IP videoconferencing products are an attractive option for organizations looking for ways to trim costs, enhance competitiveness and protect the environment. The rapid migration to converged voice/video/data networks is enabling knowledge workers to combine videoconferencing with other Web-based collaboration tools to improve communications throughout the enterprise and beyond.



PICTURE THIS

The new, video-enabled ShoreWare Professional Call Manager is at the center of what's new in ShoreTel 8. The Professional Call Manager leverages the improved look and feel and enhanced usability delivered to all levels of the Call Manager and adds new multimedia capabilities.

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WISHFUL THINKING?

Despite heightened awareness of the importance of disaster preparations, most plans are overly optimistic. Organizations that prepare only for short outages could be making a huge mistake.

Since Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, state and local governments — along with private business and the public — have developed a deeper understanding their shared vulnerabilities to disasters and the crucial importance of a comprehensive disaster recovery (DR) plan to protect communications networks. The crisis underscored the need for local and state governments to secure their communications infrastructure, build in redundant systems, and educate their constituents on the importance of being self-sufficient in the event of future disasters.

Since Katrina, a host of government agencies have adopted state-of-the-art communications tools to integrate secure, collaborative processes and applications into their communi-

cations infrastructure. Wireless laptops, mobile devices and videoconferencing systems are all used by the vast majority of agencies, and most organizations now use instant messaging.

While business continuity management (BCM) and DR programs are getting better, work still needs to be done to increase the quality and maturity of these programs. According to a recent Gartner Inc. survey of 359 information security and risk management professionals from the U.S., U.K. and Canada, nearly 60 percent of organizations only plan for their longest outage to be seven days.

“The fact that most organizations plan for an outage that lasts up to seven days indicates a huge hole in those organizations’ ability to sustain

business operations if a regional disaster strikes,” said Roberta Witty, research vice president at Gartner.

“The impact of a disaster that lasts more than one week can have enormous negative impact on revenue, reputation and brand. Regional incidents, terrorism, service provider outages and pandemics can easily last longer than seven days. Therefore, enterprises must be prepared. More mature BCM/DR programs plan for outages of at least 30 days.”

Top Priority

When planning for specific types of disaster scenarios, 77 percent of companies have a plan for a power outage or fire, and 72 percent have a plan for a natural disaster, such as a flood or hurricane. At least half the companies surveyed also have plans for IT outages, computer-virus attacks, terrorism and key service providers’ failure.

“With the growing use of third-party service providers to conduct mission-critical business functions, organizations that don’t plan for this type of business outage can find themselves in a tough position in the event that this scenario becomes a reality,” said Witty.

Most BCM/DR plans are for a single facility outage, and planning for regional disasters has dropped in priority during the past couple of years. Organizations are, however, taking pandemic planning warnings more seriously than in the past (29 percent in 2007 vs. 8 percent in 2005).

With the growing awareness that continuing business operations after a disaster requires a lot of planning, organizations are also realizing that the approach to best manage an incident is to have a dedicated group of people on a crisis management team. A total of 37 percent of organizations use a physical crisis command center to coordi-

nate emergencies, such as a local hotel room or conference room. However, understanding that many disasters happen when employees are not in one place, 31 percent of companies have established a virtual command center so that traveling or off-site personnel can be included in the management of an incident.

Get More Exercise

Conducting a business impact analysis (BIA) is the most critical process in the development of a DR strategy and associated plans because it provides the business requirements used to develop the plan. Exercising (formerly called testing) on a regular basis is the second most critical component of a BCM program.

Having a plan is only a fraction of the maturity of the BCM/DR process. Knowing that the plan works during an actual emergency is key to a business’s survival. A total of 28 percent of organizations reported that their last DR exercise went well and met all their service targets. However, 61 percent of survey participants reported that they had problems with the exercise, which should not give any organization a good sense of security that their DR program will meet the business recovery needs when a crisis strikes.

“Enterprises with the best BCM and DR practices have a corporate culture that values availability and an understanding of the costs associated with business process outages,” said Witty. “These enterprises also realize that following a well-defined process when disaster strikes is significantly better than trying to respond to an incident in crisis mode without the benefit of planning, coordination and testing, which helps minimize downtime and costs.”

PLANNING TIPS

With historic floodwaters in the Midwest, one of the deadliest tornado seasons on record and the beginning of what weather experts predict will be an above-average year for hurricanes, disaster recovery plans are being put to the test. Here are five basic planning tips from Acronis, a provider of storage management and disaster recovery software:

Batten down the hatches: Take an honest look at your office to see how you could more safely and securely store files, materials and heavy items. Are emergency exits and fire extinguishers up to code? Perform quarterly assessments. Local fire and safety officials often will assist for little or no charge.

Spread the word: As with home emergency plans, it helps for businesses to create a detailed procedure for what to do in the event something happens, whether employees are in the office, en route or at home. That could mean office-wide fire drills and call lists to get the word out quickly. For larger companies, a well-publicized site on the Intranet might do the trick.

Protect digital assets along with physical assets: With so much of business assets today residing on computers in digital form — documents, photos, intellectual property — backup and recovery becomes critical. To ensure that companies can be up and running quickly, consider making images of computers and servers so full copies of data and applications are safely tucked away. In the event that something happens, the images can be loaded onto new hardware in hours rather than days.

Test your plans: Having a plan for a disaster is fine, but does everyone know what to do? Test your plan often — especially when you change key employees.

Not all disasters are natural disasters: Remember that not every disaster will involve fire, flood, wind or earthquakes. In fact, most corporate data losses do not involve natural disasters at all. Your data protection plan must be as effective against data loss due to user error as it is to hurricanes and tornados. Simplicity is the key. Make sure all of your data is protected — operating systems, programs, configuration files, security updates and user data. Consider disk imaging rather than file-based backups.

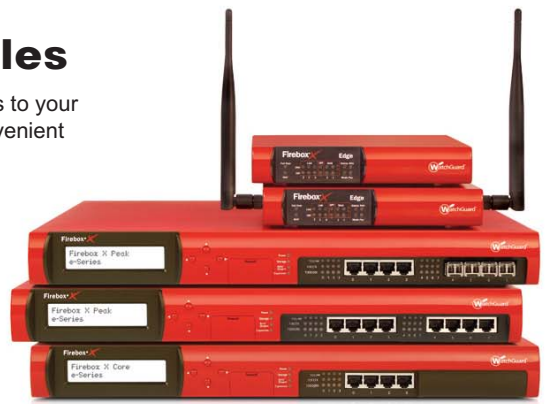


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