

GLASSHOUSE CASE STUDY



2.45	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.60
2.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.25
1.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.25
1.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.25
0.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.25
0.45	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.25

“Our backup processes were not centralized or automated, creating a lot of work for our IT staff and diverting attention away from critical projects. GlassHouse’s backup experts helped us automate tapes, devise and implement a disaster recovery plan, and move towards network attached storage. My staff is free to concentrate on other projects.”

– David Briggs, Brockway Smith, CIO

BUSINESS OVERVIEW

For the largest distributor of Andersen windows, pre-hung doors and custom millwork in New England and Eastern New York, information technology is serious business. Brockway Smith (Brosco) occupies an important part of the regional economy, supplying Andersen windows and transforming raw components into bay and bow windows and pre-hung ready-to-install doors. Thousands of different configurations are required to meet the diversity of needs of the region’s contractors, retail hardware and millwork outlets.



CIO David Briggs and his staff manage an IT environment that supports four warehouses, 50,000 SKUs and thousands of special-order building components for this 100+ year old, privately-held company.

THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

The IT operations went from five servers to one, implemented a new ERP system, established a complete disaster recovery site at its Hatfield, MA facility, and implemented IBM’s Tivoli Storage Manager to handle backup and archived data.

“We went from a decentralized processing environment to a centralized processing

environment,” said Briggs. “The software we chose for backend processing takes care of all order management and inventory, as well as accounting and purchasing, it provides a centralized product configurator functionality that’s specific to the millwork and building materials trade.”

“The number of suppliers we work with doesn’t fluctuate a lot,” adds Briggs. “What does fluctuate is the velocity of building. New home starts and rehabs have been a very strong component of the economy over the last five years.” Briggs estimates that Brosco’s fleet of 75 tractor-trailers ships some seven thousand pieces of millwork, including windows, doors and specialty millwork daily.

Clearly, any interruption to the company’s data stream could interrupt operations – and deliveries – in as little as a day. The company’s core business application performs special functions that speed order entry at the sales desk. When a customer calls in to order an assembled door unit, the order desk has the ability to configure a one-off door on the fly. Although many companies and industries have product configurators, Brosco’s business requires a high performance system that can also accommodate thousands of variations of door and window assemblies. “You wouldn’t think there would be very many configurations, but on a finite bill-of-materials basis, there are 3.5 million different configurations of doors,” says Briggs.

The thousands of millwork components in the warehouses are bar coded to speed and simplify the warehouse management process, but the sheer number of SKUs, and the turnaround time demanded by the company's customers, means Briggs demands a lot from IT. If data is unavailable, assembly in the warehouses stops, trucks don't roll and contractors don't get their windows, doors and specialty millwork. "If they don't have products show up on the construction schedule it materially affects their profitability, so when we can't perform it hurts the whole chain right down to the contractor and homeowner," Briggs points out.

Although it's difficult to estimate the cost to the business if systems go down, Briggs observes, "It would cost Brosco a pile of money if we can't ship product. On a Disaster Recovery (DR) basis, we're working towards less than 1/2 hr downtime - if this server goes out - to bring up and put our DR site into operation. We're running tests on the DR site and estimate that at this juncture it would take 8-10 hours to recover. If we lose a full day's shipment across all four warehouses, we disappoint customers, and we will lose a portion of that business."

THE IT CHALLENGE

The primary challenge to Brosco's IT organization was twofold: the company's decision to centralize IT operations and its move to Tivoli Storage Manager (TSM). A year ago, Brosco consolidated five remote servers into a single IBM S80, with storage and backup using an IBM 3583 tape library and IBM SSA disks. The initial equipment purchase left the company with a storage system that was improperly configured to run TSM.

THE SOLUTION

Briggs brought in Daymark Solutions Inc, a provider of enterprise storage and backup infrastructures, to correct issues with the tape unit. Daymark in turn brought in GlassHouse Technologies, Inc, a vendor independent provider of storage services and consulting, to help set up TSM.

After an initial storage and backup assessment, GlassHouse provided implementation services for the original TSM environment, and also developed a DR strategy and implementation for Brosco's Hatfield, Massachusetts DR site. Recently the company moved from the IBM S80 to a P650 and migrated from the IBM SSA disks to an EMC Clariion array. Brosco brought in GlassHouse for another engagement to perform the installation, migration, and an upgrade of the TSM environment.

Additionally, GlassHouse provides on-going, semi-annual maintenance for Brosco's enterprise backup environment. This yields a periodic review of backup operations, measuring performance metrics against the company's goals and service level agreements to ensure the efficient, effective operation of backups and minimize the risk of downtime and data loss to the client. "We rely on GlassHouse to keep backups running at 100% efficiency, and feel confident that our fully-tested DR site is ready to support the demands of our business."