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Janice Ferris, Company Secretary, Oliver Adams Limited

Business Profile

Company Name:
Oliver Adams Ltd.

Headquarters:
Northampton, UK

Industry:
Traditional craft bakery with local distribution

Business Environment:

- Family owned firm with history dating back to 1856
- Main bakery and 28 local shops in Northamptonshire, UK
- 400+ Employees
- Annual turnover of approx. £8 million
- Extremely time-sensitive production and distribution operations

Implementation Team:

- Vision Solutions
- Northdoor plc, London UK

Vision Solutions Product:
iTERA HA

Critical Issue

In order to deliver freshly baked goods to all of its Northamptonshire shops, Oliver Adams must keep every aspect of its operations, from the ordering of ingredients to baking, packaging and delivery, working continuously and with the greatest of care, precision and timing. Nothing can be allowed to vary in the slightest or the products won't be right, or they'll be late to shops.

Oliver Adams knows that when it comes to craft-baked goods, minutes matter. So protecting against any delays caused by computer system downtime is a vital ingredient to its success.

Results

- Assured 24/7 data and application availability
- "Hands Off" hosted IT operations
- Assured data protection without operational downtime

Technologies

- iTERA™ HA for IBM® i
- Production Server: IBM model i520, implemented by Northdoor plc
- Backup Server: IBM model i520, hosted and managed at Bakery Computing
- CERES™ Bakery Operations software, from Bakery Computing

Business Challenge

It is no surprise that the reputation of any bakery is based upon the quality and freshness of its products. But what may not be obvious are some of the ingredients that go into that seemingly simple recipe for success. The list includes the knowledge and skills of the master bakers, always the best flour, eggs and sugar, and...continuous access to computers.

Though everything it bakes is still crafted with the same care and creativity that has been the Oliver Adams tradition for over 140 years, today the company's success also comes from top-shelf business practices and state-of-the-art machinery and IT. To keep 28 shops properly stocked with freshly baked goods requires computer-based planning and operations. There is no "pipeline," no "warehouse" with ready-made goods to fall back upon. A system outage can mean big problems and, worst of all, disappointed and unhappy customers.

Having experienced a main system failure that caused them to scramble to keep operations going for nearly a week with just manual systems and incredibly dedicated employees, Oliver Adams resolved to implement changes that would prevent such a near-catastrophe from ever happening again.



Solution

Bakeries have always been known for starting their workday in the middle of the night. But even as a locally focused craft bakery, Oliver Adams almost never stops, running 24 hours a day, six days a week. Data for all routine fulfillment, as well as special orders and adjustments, must be in its computer system by 3 PM, to ensure delivery to the 28 Oliver Adams shops by 5 AM the following day. Put simply, Oliver Adams' bakery operations must be both as efficient as any large-scale bakery and as nimble and responsive as a small village shop.

Oliver Adams must be able to rely upon its core computing systems and applications for nothing less than perfect performance with no delays or downtime. To ensure this, it made the decision to outsource its IT operations. Working with Northdoor plc (www.northdoor.co.uk), the Oliver Adams team, led by Janice Ferris, Oliver Adams' Company Secretary, determined that Bakery Computing, who provides them with bakery operations software, was well qualified to manage Oliver Adams' systems on a daily basis and to provide both high availability (HA) and disaster recovery (DR) services as well.

"We regularly backed up our daily data each evening, and created a full system back up every three months," said Mrs. Ferris. "But we required a more comprehensive back up and availability scheme that would ensure our ability to build all production planning reports in time, even if we had a system failure. To do that well, we needed to work with a trusted partner to manage our IT operations, so that we could focus fully on our baking without worrying over IT issues."

Bakery Computing is the developer of the CERES bakery operations software suite, which is used by 40 bakeries in the UK. CERES runs on the IBM i operating system (formerly i5/OS), one of several operating systems that can run on IBM's Power™ Systems servers.

Northdoor recommended and implemented an IBM model i520 server in Oliver Adams' head office, and connected that server to a Logical Partition (virtual server) on Bakery Computing's IBM model i520 server, via a dedicated broadband IP connection, with a provisional dial-up connection for secure redundancy. Northdoor also recommended and supplied iTERA HA software, from Vision Solutions, to provide constant data replication between the servers.

Founded in 1989, Northdoor plc is a well established business with over 100 staff operating from offices in London, Staines and Dublin. An IBM Premier Business Partner, Northdoor has the highest level of technical accreditations for designing, implementing and supporting server, storage and networking solutions across the IBM product range.

"With competition getting ever fiercer for businesses, we are seeing the requirement for continuously available IT systems from many of our clients. These High Availability solutions are now very affordable," said Jon Milward, General Manager at Northdoor.

iTERA HA offers companies dramatically reduced exposure to downtime. Its next-generation replication and switchover capabilities fully leverage IBM's remote journaling technology. iTERA HA also provides state-of-the-art object auditing and self-healing capabilities, and is extensively automated, requiring minimal skill and labour requirements to operate and monitor.

"Installing HA was very much a strategic decision for our company," said Mrs. Ferris. She added, "We feel that the investment in iTERA HA is about more than just securing the data and the operations. It gives us free hands to take on new challenges, without worrying about downtime. It's like creating our own service level agreement."

With iTERA HA ensuring application uptime and data protection, and Bakery Computing managing all the IT for them, Oliver Adams can now concentrate on its core business: delivering the finest, freshest breads, pies and pasties to their loyal customers.

Mrs. Ferris concluded, "Oliver Adams is all about trust, quality and integrity and we like to apply this ethos as well to the parts of our business that customers rarely see. We are proud to associate with reliable partners, such as Bakery Computing, Northdoor and Vision Solutions, to continue on that path for the future."



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