



Overview

Customer Profile

Manning Architects, AP, is an architectural consulting company based in New Orleans, LA. It serves a variety of private and public sector clients in the Gulf States.

Business Situation

After Hurricane Katrina, the company had to evacuate their New Orleans Headquarters to Baton Rouge, LA. With telephones, email, and their website un-operational, there was no access to their back up server.

Solution

Manning Architects contracted with General Informatics and within 72 hours of the storm, their server, email, and website were restored and operational. The firm later consulted with General Informatics to upgrade their system so that a future natural disaster would not disrupt their business again. The company moved from Microsoft small business server 4.5 to Microsoft small business server 2003 and implemented a robust business continuity system.

Benefits

- Better access to company data
- More reliable data backup
- No more downtime for website and company data
- Access to a certified Microsoft Small Business Specialist

Architecture firm gets back to business after natural disaster within 72 hours

“Having setup a reliable network and technology infrastructure, we are now working with General Informatics to streamline our business processes. We are very excited and can already see the benefits.”

Ray Manning, AIA
President, Manning Architects

Manning Architects, AP, is an architectural consulting company that serves a variety of public and private sector clients. After Hurricane Katrina, the company had to evacuate its New Orleans headquarters and the firm’s employees relocated to Baton Rouge, LA. The management moved fast to regroup in Baton Rouge, however with the telephones, email, website, and server un-operational, there was no way left to communicate with their employees. The operations could be temporarily set up again but there was no access to the company server, just two tapes, fortunately with a latest backup. Manning Architects needed to rebuild its server fast and get communications working. Once they returned to New Orleans, they wanted to make sure that this scenario would not ever repeat itself. After contracting with General Informatics, Manning received the necessary updates and equipment in order to conduct their business operations. They received better access to company data, more reliable data backup, no more downtime from the website or company data, and access to a certified Microsoft Small Business Specialist.



Architecture firm gets back to business after natural disaster within 72 hours

“Ever since being on TotalCARE™ we have seen a dramatic decrease in our computer maintenance issues. We have never had this level of confidence in our systems before. I strongly recommend it!”

Cristina Conway, AIA
Sr. Project Manager, Manning
Architects

Situation

Manning Architects, AP, is an architectural consulting company based in New Orleans. It serves a variety of private and public sector clients in the Gulf States, including Harrah's Entertainment, Entergy Corp., BellSouth Telecommunications, and Louis Armstrong International Airport, New Orleans' closest airport.

When Hurricane Katrina struck on August 29, 2005, the company had evacuated its employees from its offices in downtown New Orleans to temporary locations in Baton Rouge, LA, about 90 miles away. After the power outages, Manning's website, email, and server went offline. Only two tape drives, containing a backup of the company's server data, made the trip to Baton Rouge.

W. Raymond Manning, the company's president, said retrieving the data from the tape drives was critical to the survival of his business. He knew that there were clients outside of New Orleans that were depending on his firm's services and that if he could not get the server up and running again, he risked losing those clients. Returning to New Orleans wasn't an option: the city remained shut down, and no one knew when residents would be allowed to return. If he could not move the data from the tape drive onto a new server, he would go out of business.

Manning also knew that in the immediate aftermath of the storm, there would be a strong demand for the services that his company offers. The longer his server and communication infrastructure stayed offline, the more business opportunities his company would miss.

The company not only needed to get its email, website, and server back up, but once it returned to New Orleans, it needed to completely reevaluate its IT infrastructure and take the right steps to improve its backup systems so that it would allow the

company to continue operating in the event of another hurricane.

Solution

Manning Architects hired General Informatics, a Microsoft Small Business Specialist, to help restore the server, email system, and website. Within 72 hours the DNS were changed, alternative backup for the communication server was setup and operational. This allowed Manning to post messages on the company website to reach out to displaced employees who did not yet know where the firm had moved to. It also allowed the company to assure clients in other parts of the country that they were open for business again.

Because General Informatics was specially certified to handle the needs of a small business, it understood more than the Microsoft server technology that was so vital to Manning Architects. It also knew that achieving the firm's objectives in a timely manner was essential.

General Informatics, as an interim step, hosted the company's site and server on a virtual server in its data center. After Manning returned to New Orleans in November, 2005, General Informatics helped develop a blueprint for upgrading the old IT infrastructure. Manning had a decent Dell server but it had been running on a severely patched up Small Business Server 4.5. Also, the company had out grown the storage capacity and their backup systems. General Informatics' helped transition to a system that made more sense for the business needs of the company both immediate and strategic with the least investment. Instead of replacing the server, they added a storage array which could allow the company to grow for a long time without replacing hardware. The OS was replaced with the Small Business Server 2003, which added a plethora of new features to help grow the company. A two tiered approach to backup using tape drive

For More Information

For more information about General Informatics products and services, dial (225) 767-7670 or toll free: 1.888.FISUSMO (349-8766). To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: www.geninf.com

For more information about Manning Architects, call (504) 412-2000 or visit the website at www.manningarchitects.com

and USB drives were deployed. An array of automation scripts and group policies were deployed so that the systems became self-healing and the IT burden on the company that did not have a full time IT person could be minimized. The Blackberry was replaced by HP 6515 pocket PC phone edition so management had the necessary information available to them at any time. File organization systems and policies were changed and the users were trained to utilize the rich functionality of the platform in conjunction with the best practices for architectural firms.

Benefits

Better access to company data from remote locations

Manning's new server provided a boost to productivity almost immediately. General Informatics discovered that the previous server had not been configured to take advantage of the full power that Small Business Server offers. The new system, when properly set up, could remotely access data and e-mail, which allowed them to stay in touch with the office and clients from anywhere.

Small Business Server 2003 allowed the company to take advantage of collaborative messaging features such as scheduling, contact, and task management capabilities. This would not only let them keep track of each other at client meetings or on the road, but would also prevent the kind of chaos that followed Hurricane Katrina, in which Manning had to reach some employees by posting messages on the company's public website.

More reliable data backup in case disaster strikes again

One of the most sought-after functions is one that the company hopes it will never have to use: the new server is backed up in a number of ways, including with Small Business Server

2003's built-in backup features, as well as remotely, with the help of General Informatics.

The Hurricane has changed Manning's company culture. For Christmas, employees were given hard disk drives to back up their data individually, and they are now considering buying laptop computers for everyone. If another hurricane hits New Orleans, then Manning will be prepared. During Katrina, Manning estimates that the company lost \$50,000 in billable hours. Now, the company would shut down for no more than a day- if that.

No downtime for website and company data

Thanks to the quick recovery by General Informatics, Manning was able to win a key account in New Orleans: the damage assessment at Lois Armstrong International Airport, which involved taking inventory of the damage caused by the storm and from turning the airport terminal into a makeshift hospital. The firm also received a contract for major expansion and renovation of the existing Concourse C terminal that allowed for increased international flight handling capacity.

Access to a certified Microsoft Small Business Specialist

Microsoft's new Small Business Specialist designation helps small businesses find an IT pro who is attuned to the needs of a business with fewer than 25 employees. Manning's connection with General Informatics didn't end after his server was operational – instead, it led him to make a smart investment in technology that will see his business through the next natural disaster.