Case Study
Symmetry's Cloud-Based Disaster Recovery Solution for Edward Don Improves Overall Business Operations

Increased capacity and managed services model help food service equipment supplier deliver superior customer service online, improve testing capabilities, and focus employee resources on growing the business

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>
> - George Barwacz, Operations Manager at Edward Don

The Challenges

Founded in 1921 as a janitorial supply company in Chicago, Edward Don & Company is the nation's largest distributor of food service equipment and supplies. With an inventory of more than 12,000 products and a global network of more than 3,000 "Don-approved" suppliers, the family-owned company boasts a motto, "Everything but the food." Unlike its early days with salespeople traveling the country, a significant percentage of Edward Don's business now comes via online purchases accounting for millions of dollars of revenue each day.

It became imperative that the web-based ordering system must be available to customers 24 x 7 x 365. With this deep reliance on technology, and an understanding of what was at stake for Edward Don's business success, the company installed a disaster recovery (DR) solution to keep online systems continuously active. The DR solution essentially was an arrangement to rent server space and software from an integrator; Edward Don had to manage the system itself using internal resources.

"We knew we were two years into a three-year contract with our old DR provider, and we hadn't been able to fully and successfully execute a failover test on SAP," says George Barwacz, operations manager at Edward Don. "The solution we had was under-powered, so we didn't even try. We felt like we were treading water and putting the business at risk."

Since these performance issues could have such a potential impact on customer satisfaction and sales the company decided to find a new DR partner.

"We needed a partner that really understood the nuances of SAP and could install a DR solution that was able to handle the volume and speed of transactions in our system," Barwacz says.

The Ideal Cloud DR Solution

Through a referral Edward Don initially came across Symmetry Corporation, an IBM Advanced Business Partner, certified Hosting and Cloud provider.

"We knew people at companies that had implemented SAP without having much in-house expertise in Basis," Barwacz says. "I asked them how they had done it, and they said they were working with Symmetry. Their high level of satisfaction with Symmetry's work led us to our present relationship."

When Edward Don issued the RFP, it was natural for the company to include Symmetry particularly since they were SSAE certified on DR.

"There was already a relationship there, an embedded trust," says Barwacz. "Symmetry professionals know some aspects of our landscape better than we know it ourselves, which sped up the process and took out some of the learning curve and guesswork others might have to do."

Symmetry recommended moving to a Cloud-based solution that was scalable, easy to manage, high availability (HA)/DR application. By moving to a Cloud-based solution, Symmetry would take overall management and maintenance of the system, freeing Edward Don's internal resources for other mission-critical tasks.

Enablement of the new DR environment took roughly two weeks start to finish. Edward Don requires online orders to be taken 24x7, so Symmetry diligently worked to complete all testing to be done without interfering with the normal course of business.

"It was very fast and efficient, and most importantly invisible to our customers," states Barwacz.

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The Results

The primary goal of the project was to create a DR environment that would keep the business operating normally even if the backup system had to take over. That goal has been achieved. However, Edward Don also gained more unexpected benefits in Symmetry's cloud DR environment with better system performance for testing and reduction of staff time to focus on more enterprise critical initiatives.

Edward Don was able to improve the ability to create realistic tests of the system's ability to respond. The old system was under-powered, Edward Don had not been able to simulate disaster scenarios to check system response. However, in the new cloud DR environment this was no longer an issue with Symmetry's Cloud-based solution.

"We now have the capacity we need to perform realistic failover and HA tests," Barwacz says. "We've taken hope out of the equation."

Moving to a Cloud-based solution has helped Edward Don achieved the results they were looking for in terms of staff time and utility. "With our old solution, we spent an inordinate amount of time managing hardware and software," he says. "It was a high priority since so much of our success depends on system availability. Now, we don't even have to think about it. Symmetry designed an HA environment that is specific to Edward Don and our needs, and managed it all for us. Rather than spending their time monitoring and maintaining infrastructure, our internal resources have moved on to more value-added projects. It is really helping us move the business forward."

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