



CLIENT SUCCESS STORY



Louisiana
Machinery



It's business as usual when Caterpillar dealership upgrades to new network

When Caterpillar Dealer Louisiana Machinery Co., LLC, converted its 19 locations to a new computer network, hardly anyone noticed. And that was the plan.

Downtime is not an option for this dealership, which sells, rents, and services equipment—from small parts to multi-million-dollar machines—throughout the state of Louisiana. With support from technology partner Advanced System Designs (ASD), the dealership upgraded its Wide Area Network (WAN) to support Cat's DBSi e-business system—without missing a beat.

"We didn't even have to warn the branches that we were working on it," says Jerry Giangrosso, Louisiana Machinery's Information Systems Manager. "The changeover took just seconds."

It also was important to keep the old system up and running during the switch. "We run a very lean staff and as a functionality of that, the computers at every location need to be working all the time. There aren't other employees there to share the workload if a PC is down. The machines need to work."

Standardizing to lower costs and improve efficiency

The ASD-designed plan took into account all of the dealership's business needs, especially its desire to lower IT costs by standardizing hardware and software.

"Standardization had to be the letter of the day," says Giangrosso. "If every site was different, it would have been much more difficult. Outside of the IP address and the name, the branches had to be identical. We don't have the manpower to deal with different hardware platforms."

Standardization also allowed for a remote changeover to the new network. "We didn't have the luxury to go to all our different sites," Giangrosso says. "ASD designed this so we could do it from our main office. We used the old network to cut to the new network. All they needed at the remote site was a pair of hands and eyes to complete the switch."



“ASD didn’t just come in and tell us what products and services we needed. They learned our business, evaluated our network, then designed a network especially for us. I look forward to using ASD for other projects in the future.”—Jerry Giangrosso, *Information Systems Manager, Louisiana Machinery Co., LLC*

Technology

People

Audit & Assessment
Routing & Switching
Security
Management
Monitoring
Total Cost of Ownership
Bandwidth Analysis
VoIP

Business

Results



Finding the best solution

Because Louisiana Machinery worked with ASD in the past, the choice was easy when it came to finding a partner to design the new network. “They brought the experience we were looking for,” Giangrosso says. “Karl Belter of ASD knows our network.” ASD developed the MultiProtocol Label Switching (MPLS) core WAN technology that Cat used to connect with its dealers several years ago. Today, ASD staff maintains the primary source of documentation all Cat dealers use to deploy the new technology.

Belter, leader of the ASD network practice, started the Louisiana Machinery project as he does with every client—reviewing the client’s network, learning their wants and needs, then estimating the cost to meet those needs. “We don’t tie ourselves to any one provider or manufacturer,” he says. “We try to find the right solution to best meet the business needs.”

First ASD performed a bandwidth estimate, looking at current applications and those proposed for the new network. Because ASD has worked with Caterpillar for many years, ASD is able to provide accurate estimates for the bandwidth necessary for the new network.

A Total Cost of Ownership analysis was next—determining not only the price of the hardware and software, but including all the expenses involved in deploying and owning the new IT system. Management, support, and indirect costs sometimes account for the bulk of the total expenditures, so it’s important to identify that amount up front.

After presenting several possible solutions to Louisiana Machinery, ASD negotiated discounts with the chosen vendor (Cisco), tested the equipment, and then helped activate the system.

Becoming self-sufficient

Another goal of Louisiana Machinery is to become as self-sufficient as possible when it comes to Information Technology. “Normally we will try to get a consultant, and learn from that consultant, working side-by-side so we will know how to support ourselves in the future,” Giangrosso says.

ASD provided several quotes, estimating what it would cost for ASD to do the entire project and what the savings would be if Louisiana Machinery staff did a portion of the installation.

“We encouraged their staff to perform tasks that were originally ours,” says Belter. “We activated the first sites while Louisiana Machinery monitored. Then the roles were reversed and ASD monitored as their staff converted sites. They converted the remaining sites without our presence—providing valuable experience and helping them understand their new network.”

“We watched ASD install the first router, then we were on our own,” Giangrosso says.

Allowing room to grow

The timing of Louisiana Machinery’s project couldn’t have been better from a hardware standpoint. Cisco announced its new router just days before the dealership contacted ASD about the upgrade. “All the equipment is so new that its lifespan is estimated at five years,” says Belter. “And that’s good. This equipment is going to be long-lasting, plus there is room to grow.”

ASD sized a larger chassis to allow Louisiana Machinery to expand without upgrading its equipment. The upfront cost of the hardware was a little more expensive, but the cost to retrofit for an expansion would be even higher. “There’s enough room for something else without it being extravagant,” Belter says. “We gave them a complete solution.”

Plans already are underway to expand the new network for Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), the ability to make telephone calls and send faxes over IP-based networks. During the initial network assessment, ASD saw a need to upgrade an antiquated phone system as well. “It’s not a question of ‘if’ they will upgrade, it’s a question of ‘when,’” says Belter. “We were able to buy the hardware for the new network bundled with a license for Call Manager Express, so they won’t have to upgrade their system when they migrate to VoIP.” Installing the system later would cost about seven times as much as paying for the additional hardware upfront.

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Getting the job done right

“ASD delivered the results we needed,” says Giangrosso. “The process was quite professional and quite enjoyable. The project came in on time and under budget. And management was happy because there were no outages and no one called to complain.”