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Information Technology Manager
Life-Tech, Inc.



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Industry: Medical Manufacturing
HQ: Houston, TX

Problem: Migration
Solution: Windows 2003

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Life-Tech Moves to Windows 2003

THE CHALLENGE

EOL Means It's Time to Migrate

It's no surprise that many companies, particularly small to mid-sized companies, are struggling to accommodate the quickly encroaching end-of-life for Windows NT and Exchange 5.5, scheduled for late this year. The decision to stick with these older standard-bearers or to move to new technologies *now* has been thrust upon them – the inconvenience, the adjustment to the new or unfamiliar, not to mention the cost of migration.

Life-Tech, Inc., a leading manufacturer of electronic medical devices and specialty disposables, is a small but successful company of approximately 100 employees. Based in Stafford, Texas, Life-Tech has provided innovative medical products since 1970, and it relies on its network for vital communications and company operations.

So when Sandra Simon, Information Technology Manager at Life-Tech and a 17-year veteran at the company, began experiencing performance issues with her aging network, she realized just what she was facing. A long time Novell fan, she had reluctantly been persuaded only a few years ago to implement Windows NT and Exchange 5.5. Now she faced another decision: not *if*, but *when* to move to Windows 2003 and all of its associated products.

“Primarily, we wanted to move to Exchange 2003,” stated Simon. “But we had three Compaq ProLiant servers and the equipment was four to five years old. We were starting to experience problems on the current servers.”

THE SOLUTION

Recognizing she faced a migration, one of the first persons Simon contacted was Richard Wise, account manager with Accudata Systems. “We’ve been a client of Accudata Systems for more than 10 years, since 1994,” Simon stated.

“I had pretty much made up my mind that we were going to move to a Windows 2003 environment. Richard helped by defining and refining our needs. I knew that he knows more about the technologies out there and the features and capabilities of the different systems.”

“Life-Tech is a relatively small company, and Sandra, its information technology manager, is a longtime client,” Wise recalled. “Over the years, she had upgraded to new technologies including Exchange 5.5 just a few years ago. Sandra wanted to migrate to Exchange 2003 and that requires Windows 2003 and Active Directory.”

“The need to migrate to 2003 products is becoming more urgent for many companies on these older technologies,” Wise added. “Not only are they losing support services for their old systems, they are recognizing the need for more stable, up-to-date technologies and greater functionality with these new products.”

Integrate with HP UNIX

The challenge Life-Tech faced was moving everybody to a Windows 2003 environment with Active Directory and also integrating its HP UNIX computer, which still runs the manufacturing operation. They also had to be able to do all printing through the network printers, which is a challenge with the software currently on the UNIX machine.

"The UNIX application will run on Windows NT, or now Windows 2003 of course, and I need that to keep our manufacturing operations up," said Simon. "It doesn't need any attention; it's an easy system to manage."

Life-Tech purchased three new Compaq servers and used one existing server to act as one of two domain controllers.

Matt Taylor, an Accudata Systems network engineer, implemented the migration at Life-Tech. "The systems at Life-Tech were having serious daily problems – the services would fail, lock up, email would slow or stop, users couldn't connect."

Windows 2003 was the obvious solution. Windows 2003 is built on the .NET XML technology framework, which is the direction everything is going. Most new software is XML based, so Simon knew moving to Windows 2003 was necessary to stay current with the applications that are becoming available to the enterprise.

The migration took about three weeks to complete and involved configuring each desktop, making modifications, adding them to the new domain, setting up Outlook accounts on the new Exchange server, and handling any problems that arose from the new implementation.

RESULTS

New Features, New Functionality

Some of the new features of the Windows 2003 products include Outlook Web Access and Exchange mailbox recovery tools.

While Life-Tech doesn't have many remote users, they do have sales managers who require access and could utilize Outlook Web Access, or OWA. OWA is a web front end that appears to the user just like the Outlook client on the desktop. When you're off site or at home, you simply open a web page and access all your email. It looks just like your desktop, and it has most of the same functionality.

"One of the best new Exchange features is the mailbox recovery service," Taylor added. "In the old days, if a user deleted his mailbox – which is not as difficult or unlikely an occurrence as you'd think – you would have to bring down your production server to restore the database. You could lose current email that was not part of your current backup."

With new Exchange 2003 mailbox recovery features, you can restore a complete copy of email. You can bring up an Information Store, recover individual mailboxes or messages on the fly, and copy them into the production Information Store. "This is one of the best features of Exchange 2003," Taylor stated.

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*~Sandra Simon
Information Technology Manager
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Life-Tech is keeping up with the technology it needs to be and stay competitive, with systems that are more feature rich, stable, and reliable than previous ones.

"I can't say enough about the consulting and service Accudata Systems has provided to Life-Tech," Simon stated. "It's just been superior. I have interviewed and quoted

with many other companies in town – big companies – through the years. I've always come back to Accudata Systems for the best solution and the best pricing. I hope that we continue to have a long and mutually satisfactory relationship."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information regarding Accudata Systems, call 800.246.4908 or visit our web site www.accudatasystems.com.