

Customer Case Study: Nicholas & Company

Critical Issue

On-time delivery is a vital competitive issue in the foodservice industry, and Nicholas & Company stakes its reputation on meeting its customers' needs. Continuous availability of technology including a warehouse management system is key to the company's continued success, so a high availability solution is a fundamental business requirement.

Results

- Systems vital to customer service are up continuously.
- The backup window has been eliminated.
- Role-swapping is smooth, fast, and easy.
- Security and flexibility for development with a test environment on the backup server.
- Proven foundation for future expansion of disaster recovery capabilities.

Technologies

- Assure iTERA HA
- IBM i production and remote backup servers
- System i 525 CBU edition backup server
- In-house developed warehouse management application and 3rd-party sales application.

Company Name

Nicholas & Company

Headquarters:

Salt Lake City, Utah (USA)

Industry:

Foodservice Distribution Employees:
Approximately 500

Business Environment:

- Founded in 1939, now a leading broadline foodservice distributor
- Customers range from "mom and pop" eateries to major restaurant chains across the U.S.
- 24/7 operations at the company's 300,000 square-foot warehouse
- As many as 60,000 cases of food delivered each day

Implementation Team:

In-house IT staff at Nicholas & Company

Precisely Product:

Assure iTERA HA

Business Challenge

As a broadline foodservice distributor, Nicholas & Company delivers food and other products to a wide range of customers, from the smallest restaurants to national fast-food chains. Investments in technology have helped Nicholas & Company continue to meet a key customer demand in this highly competitive industry: on-time delivery.

Nicholas & Company's sales applications and warehouse management system run on IBM System i servers at the company headquarters in Salt Lake City. To protect its echnology investments and maintain its reputation for excellent service, Nicholas & Company began to look for a high-availability solution.

"Nicholas & Company is the largest broadline distributor in the U.S. that operates out of a single warehouse," explained Russell Erickson, System Administrator, Nicholas & Company. "With receiving during the day and order picking at night, we can't afford downtime."

Plans to move the company's main corporate Web site, email, and voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) system to its in-house servers made high availability even more essential at Nicholas & Company.

"The company was looking for a reliable way to keep its systems up continuously, move the backup window off the main server, and have some disaster recovery capabilities in the future," said Erickson..

Solution

A long-time user of IBM hardware, Nicholas & Company decided to upgrade its servers, move to the V5R4 release of the i5/OS operating system, and install Assure iTERA HA from Precisely.

The installation of Assure iTERA HA was completed by Erickson, based on his experience with the product. "It went very well, and there were no problems," he said. "I had used Assure iTERA HA for about five years at another company, and I've been very impressed with the product itself and the support staff behind it," he added.

The company replaced its IBM System i Model 820 server with a new Model 525 and bought a 525 CBU edition as a backup server. Erickson used Assure iTERA HA to move to the new hardware via role-swap, and was pleased with the speed of this switchover. "It was very easy to do the migration. There were no problems, and we were covered the whole time," said Erickson.

"Overall, you just don't need to worry about Assure iTERA HA: it's easy to manage thanks to a lot of built-in fail-safes, audits and other features," stated Erickson. "We plan to do a couple of role-swaps every year," he added.

"We used Assure iTERA HA to move to our new hardware via role-swap, and it was very quick: the switchover took about five minutes. Our IT team and other staff were impressed with the seamless migration".

**– Russell Erickson,
System Administrator,
Nicholas & Company**

Eliminating downtime has been one of the major benefits of Assure iTERA HA. "We used to back up and IPL overnight on Saturdays for about six hours, and that has been eliminated," said Erickson. "Using Assure iTERA HA, we are up 24/7, and that will be even more important when we bring our website and email in house," he emphasized.

Another benefit is that development is easier and safer to do in a test environment on the backup rather than on the primary server. "Looking ahead, Assure iTERA HA will also help when we expand: we'll move our CBU edition server to a separate location, giving us true disaster recovery protection," Erickson explained.

Once the company is hosting its email, VoIP and web sites in-house, their "eggs will be in one basket," according to Erickson. "With Assure iTERA HA, we'll know that the basket won't break. In terms of risk and ROI, it's definitely worth the price of the software and install to have the peace of mind that our systems will be available to meet our needs and our customers," concluded Erickson.