Case Study:

Dutch Valley Foods, Inc.

Dutch Valley Food Distributors Cuts IT Costs and Improves Reliability and Performance with iCepts Technology Infrastructure Solutions and Support.

Dutch Valley Food Distributors, Inc. is a trusted supplier of bulk foods to a wide range of retailers across much of the US. This thriving family business also owns a number of private label brands, including A Touch of Dutch, Dutch Barrel, Dutch Value and Bulk Foods, Inc.

Focusing on excellence in both products and service, Dutch Valley seeks to build long-term relationships with its customers. One way they do this is to offer tools and solutions that help their retail partners save time and money to be more successful.

To provide these customer-facing applications, as well as maintain overall business efficiency, Dutch Valley relies on a robust, secure IT infrastructure. iCepts Technology Group, Inc., a technology solutions provider in nearby Middletown, PA, has been Dutch Valley's IT infrastructure partner since the early 1990s.

The Challenge:

Make the most of new technology to optimize IT efficiency and cost.

iCepts Technology Group, Inc. and Dutch Valley have collaborated in a number of areas over the years. According to John Sheaffer, IT Director, iCepts has recently helped with infrastructure upgrades in several key areas, including firewalls, storage and two-factor authentication (2FA).

The Solutions:

Upgrade Firewalls to Cut Costs and Improve Security and Manageability.

Dutch Valley recently moved to replace underperforming Cisco firewalls, including the Cisco FireSIGHT management center, with Fortinet FortiGate technology. iCepts handled the purchase, setup, configuration and testing of the new firewalls, and also manages and troubleshoots them currently.

"On iCepts' recommendation we did a proof of concept with the FortiGate products and it was obvious that they would work much better for us and also save us several thousand dollars per year," states Mr. Sheaffer. "The FortiGate firewalls can block potentially malicious traffic that our Cisco firewalls were letting through. Reporting is also better, and is far easier plus faster for me to analyze." In addition, the new firewalls also provide added security, including intrusion detection and antivirus support.

With the more cost-effective FortiGate firewalls, Dutch Valley was able to create a redundant firewall configuration to improve reliability and better serve remote users, both employees and customers. Mr. Sheaffer explains: "We have two FortiGate devices in a failover configuration. If one goes down the other picks right up where it left off, so there's no loss of coverage."

> *"By being informed about current trends and how other businesses are solving similar problems, we can stay ahead of the curve here at Dutch Valley Foods"-John Sheaffer, IT Director, Dutch Valley Foods, Inc.*

Move to Hybrid SANs and a Virtual Server Cluster to Improve Efficiency and Data Protection.

Dutch Valley also worked with iCepts to replace older EqualLogic storage area network (SAN) devices with newer and higher-performing Nimble Storage SANs. The new storage currently supports a virtual server cluster. iCepts recommended the new technology, did the setup, configuration and testing, and provides ongoing support.

"We were running out of IOPS (Input/Output Operations Per Second, a measure of throughput and performance) on our SANs," Mr. Sheaffer notes. "Based on iCepts' recommendation and subsequent testing, we replaced our older SANs and direct attached storage (DAS) systems with up-to-date Nimble Storage SAN infrastructure."

Mr. Sheaffer continues: "The new equipment is thousands of IOPS faster than what we had, and it gives us much greater storage capacity. We have the new SAN devices configured for high availability, with redundant connections, and also have split up workloads across different SANs.

"The new SAN configuration also facilitates taking snapshots of data. This gives us a very easy-to-use backup/recovery tool for data protection—it relieves a lot of worries for me," Mr. Sheaffer relates.

Compared to DAS, a SAN storage environment also provides higher reliability and performance along with centralized management. This makes SAN a better choice to support virtual server infrastructure.

With virtual servers (also called virtual machines or VMs), a single physical machine can run multiple operating system environments and associated workloads that are logically isolated from one another. Like more and more organizations, Dutch Valley has embraced server virtualization to optimize hardware utilization and save on energy costs and datacenter space.

"When we moved to Microsoft Hyper-V for virtualization, we moved software and workloads from about 13 physical servers onto a single server," Mr. Sheaffer says. "Today we're running about 60-70 virtual servers across three physical servers with excellent reliability, performance and manageability. Many of these VMs run high-end software distribution workloads."

Leverage Two-Factor Authentication to Reduce IT Security Risk.

Dutch Valley needs to provide about 75 sales staff, telecommuters and other remote users with access to business applications and data. Until recently, remote access was via username/password authentication over standard VPN protocols. In this scenario, a company laptop or other mobile device in the wrong hands combined with compromised access credentials would give a cybercriminal direct access to sensitive data on the corporate network.

To mitigate this data security risk, iCepts helped Dutch Valley implement two-factor authentication (2FA) for the corporate VPN. In addition to valid username/password credentials, access now requires a randomized, six-digit code sent to the user's mobile phone as an SMS text message or via a smartphone app.

"2FA is now used for all remote connections into our corporate network," Mr. Sheaffer points out. "This greatly reduces the risk of a data breach through our VPN access."

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The Results:

"Top-Notch" Service, Recommendations and More.

A big reason why Dutch Valley has grown with iCepts for over 25 years is service, support and value-add expertise that goes the extra mile to help their business.

"The support that we receive from iCepts has been top-notch," asserts Mr. Sheaffer. "If I need emergency help, it's available. If anything comes up that I'm unsure about, I just contact iCepts' support team."

"The wealth of knowledge I've gained from working with iCepts has been phenomenal," adds Mr. Sheaffer. "I especially appreciate the recommendations they make to help improve our environment.

"They often share what they're doing with other customers that might benefit us, too. iCepts is not afraid of new tech and new products—they actually work with me to research and evaluate solutions.

"By being informed about current trends and how other businesses are solving similar infrastructure problems, we can stay ahead of the curve here at Dutch Valley Foods," Mr. Sheaffer concludes.

About iCepts Technology Group, Inc.

Since 1980, iCepts Technology Group, Inc., a 100% employee-owned company, has been working with wholesale distributors, manufacturers, and other industries with various supply chain management and other technology solutions.

Our consistent goal is to leverage our vast industry experience to partner with organizations to achieve greater efficiency, streamline operations and gain access to vital business reporting in order to stay competitive plus profitable through the use of technology.

iCepts Technology Group, Inc.
Supply Chain and Technology Experts
1301 Fulling Mill Road
Middletown, PA 17057
www.icepts.com
717-704-1000
info@icepts.com

100% employee owned