



Overview

Country: United States

Industry: Retail

Customer Profile

Hanneke Industrial Supply has served retail and wholesale customers in the St. Louis area for more than 75 years. It competes successfully against large retailers by providing exceptional service.

Business Situation

Hanneke's computing infrastructure was weakened by a mix of operating systems on the desktop and a lack of centralized administrative tools. The company also needed more powerful and reliable hardware.

Solution

Hanneke chose Intel-based hardware running Microsoft Windows® Small Business Server 2003, Microsoft Windows XP Professional with Service Pack 2, Microsoft Office 2003 Basic and Small Business Editions.

Benefits

- Performance and stability
- Easier administration
- More time for customers
- Ability to add functionality

Hardware Supplier Maintains Competitive Edge with New Computing Environment

“When people ask me my line of work, I say it’s the old-fashioned hardware business, but with the help of some very new technology.”

Tony Miller, President, Hanneke Industrial Supply

Like all traditional hardware suppliers, Hanneke Industrial Supply faces a competitive challenge from the large nationwide retailers. To survive and thrive, Hanneke stocks more than 40,000 separate products and uses the Internet to access 20,000 more. In the early 2000s, however, this became a challenge, because the firm's computing environment couldn't keep up. Different software versions on desktops made file sharing difficult, and a lack of centralized server tools posed obstacles to efficient management and administration. Moreover, performance and stability became problematic as computing needs outpaced hardware capacity. Working with J&B Technologies, a Microsoft® Certified Partner and Intel reseller, Hanneke upgraded its systems to include Intel Pentium 4 processors at the desktop and a server based on dual Intel Xeon processors running Microsoft Windows® Small Business Server 2003.



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John Kistler, President, JB Technologies

Situation

Hanneke Industrial Supply has been selling hardware and industrial supplies to retail and wholesale customers for more than 75 years. Operating from three locations in the St. Louis area, the business thrives in spite of competition from the mammoth retailers, one of which opened in 1997 less than a mile from Hanneke's main store. Hanneke President Tony Miller says that there was certainly an impact at first, but by continuing to provide excellent customer service, the Hanneke team soon returned the business to the prior year's sales levels. Since then, the stores have maintained steady growth and in 2004 recorded a 9 percent increase in revenue.

“When people ask me my line of work, I say it's the old-fashioned hardware business, but with the help of some very new technology,” Miller says. “We're not going to be opening lots of new stores across the country, but we are going to use technology to help our customers find what they want, when they want it.”

In addition to using the Internet, Miller and his staff of nearly three dozen rely on a point-of-sale software solution running on a proprietary server that provides inventory, general ledger, and related tasks to run the business. The store also began running the Microsoft® Windows® operating system on its desktop computers in the early 1990s and installed a variety of Microsoft products in the years following.

By 2004, the mixed nature of the Hanneke desktop environment was causing problems that employees could not ignore. “Three versions of Windows made it difficult to ensure that users were running the most recent or most appropriate version of any given security application,” Miller points out. “Multiple versions of Microsoft Office made file sharing complicated. A lack of powerful

tools for centralized management left users in charge of setting up the printer, a confusing situation at best.”

On top of this, the hardware was in serious need of an upgrade. “The memory in our server and desktop computers just wasn't sufficient for supporting the kind of serious Web browsing that Hanneke staff required to satisfy customer requests for hard-to-find parts,” Miller says. “For the firm's power users, lockups and crashes occurred three or four times each day, commonly when the user was seeking a product on the Internet while the customer waited on the phone.

Moreover, many users were asking for a more powerful e-mail system, some wanted remote-access capabilities, and the business as a whole needed security software based on the latest antispyware and antivirus technology—all of which depended on up-to-date computer hardware.”

Solution

To select the technology for a new computing environment, Miller enlisted the help of JB Technologies, a Microsoft Certified Solution Provider and Intel Premier Provider also based in the St. Louis area. JB Technologies, which builds, services, and supports systems for small and midsize businesses, has served as an external IT department for Hanneke since 2001. For this reason, Miller trusted the firm's executives to know what kind of software and hardware it would take to help him keep his business running smoothly, maximize employee productivity, and stay connected with customers.

Working with Miller, JB Technologies President John Kistler decided on a software environment based on Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2003 on the server and Microsoft Windows XP Professional and Microsoft Office 2003 Editions on the desktop. Kistler points to two primary factors

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Bob Palmer, Onsite Technical Manager, JB Technologies

that led to the selection of Windows Small Business Server 2003. “Hanneke needed an enhanced e-mail system, and they needed to keep costs under control,” he says. “This led us to Windows Small Business Server 2003, with its comprehensive support for e-mail, system management, data backup, and communications.”

For the hardware side of equation, Kistler recommended Ingram Micro servers based on dual Intel Xeon processors and desktops based on Intel Pentium 4 processors, and Miller agreed. “We chose the dual-processor-based servers, as well as features such as integrated RAID, dual memory channels, and memory sparing and mirroring, to provide Hanneke an extra measure of reliability,” Kistler says.

After conferring with Kistler and JB Technologies Onsite Technical Manager Bob Palmer, Miller decided to outfit the firm with the new computing environment as soon as possible. Kistler and Palmer worked around the clock to install a server, networking equipment, 16 desktop computers, and a full suite of server and desktop software in barely over a week.

“Usually, to work out the glitches in such an installation takes at least six to eight weeks,” Kistler explains. “But Windows Small Business Server 2003 helped us to implement this installation in a fraction of the time by providing multiple server applications in an integrated package. The program also simplifies the addition of client computers, and the software for them, through a Web-based configuration utility.”

The new Hanneke computing environment consists of two servers: one running Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2003 Premium Edition and supporting file, print, networking, and e-mail services; and one running SCO UNIX and supporting the

point-of-sale solution. The proprietary server distributes data to the server running Windows Small Business Server and to the desktop computers for analysis with Microsoft Excel. On the desktops are Microsoft Windows XP Professional with Service Pack 2, Microsoft Office 2003 Basic Edition, and Microsoft Office 2003 Small Business Edition.

Benefits

With the new computing environment in place, Hanneke Industrial Supply staff are finding it easier to accomplish everyday business tasks, communicate among one other, and provide customers the responsive service and support that enables Hanneke to compete successfully.

Greater Performance and Stability

According to Palmer, users have noticed a definite improvement in usability and performance. “Employees are excited about the new interface and productivity features of Windows XP and Microsoft Office 2003, and have commented on the improved performance provided by the new Intel-based hardware,” he says. “Moreover, because they are finally running the same version of Office, file sharing is infinitely easier, and because Hanneke can now manage the printer centrally with the help of tools in Windows Small Business Server 2003, that resource runs more reliably and predictably.”

Users also can count on their computer to be there when they need it. “Hanneke no longer has power users becoming ‘powerless’ because their system has locked up while they’re seeking a part for a customer who’s waiting on the phone,” Palmer says. “Now, they can access as many Web sites and open as many windows as they need to find what the customer wants. Lockups and crashes are practically unheard of anymore.”

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Tony Miller, President, Hanneke Industrial Supply

Palmer explains that it's both hardware and software that support this new stability as well as the system's greater overall reliability. “The hardware's dual memory channels support the running of multiple, memory-hungry applications, and its redundant processor and storage designs help to ensure protection against crashes and data loss,” he says. But to keep the system running optimally, he adds, involves a team effort between hardware and software.

“Unlike older versions of the operating system, Windows Small Business Server 2003 supports hardware-based management capabilities such as remote monitoring and remote notification,” Palmer points out. “Consequently, administrators can be aware of any hardware problems the moment they arise.”

For Miller, Windows Small Business Server 2003 also supports a practical and thorough approach to information and file management. “The documents we work with on a daily basis contain vital data in forms ranging from customer quotes to new pricing, sales histories to competitive analyses,” he explains. “So we value the centralized file-management, file-access, and file-storage capabilities of Windows Small Business Server 2003. These capabilities also enable me to minimize the time I have to spend on administration so that I have more time for serving customers.”

“The Tools and Technology Are There”

For the immediate future, Palmer and Kistler will work with Miller to provide users with shared faxing and shared scheduling. They also will take advantage of the built-in firewall protection and secure remote access of Windows Small Business Server 2003 to enable users to access the network from home or while traveling.

“That's the big benefit to small businesses of basing an environment on Windows Small Business Server 2003,” Kistler says. “When the business is ready to add capabilities, the tools and technology are there—fully integrated, and at no additional cost.”

That's also a benefit to JB Technologies, Kistler adds. “When we can help a customer add such capabilities for only the cost of our services, it puts us in a great light. In that way, Windows Small Business Server 2003 is a bonus not only for our customer's business but for our business as well.”

For More Information

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For more information about Hanneke Industrial Supply products and services, call 1 (877) 442-6635 or visit the Web site at: www.hanneke.com

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