



SafeData Provides Ahlstrom with High Availability Solution

Overview

Ahlstrom is a global leader in the development, manufacture and marketing of high performance fiber-based materials. Nonwovens and specialty papers, made by Ahlstrom, are used in a large variety of everyday products, e.g. in filters, wipes, flooring, labels and tapes. The company has a strong position in several business areas in which it operates, built upon the company's unique fiber expertise and innovative approach. Ahlstrom's 5,525 employees serve customers via sales offices and production facilities in more than 20 countries on six continents.

Ahlstrom is ranked among the top 10 nonwoven manufacturers with two locations in Windsor Locks, Conn. and Chirnside, Scotland. These two manufacturing facilities employ about 850 Ahlstrom employees.

Challenge

In 2004, these two Ahlstrom locations were making a change from their AS/400 (now iSeries) platforms and legacy systems to a new, proprietary manufacturing system. While the 22-person IT staff for these two locations was focused on the transition to the new manufacturing system, Ahlstrom needed to find a way to manage the existing system running its mission-critical legacy applications to ensure continuous operations.

Additionally, because Ahlstrom has made significant capital investments in its costly paper machines, the manufacturer needed to ensure its systems would be operational on a continual basis during the transition in order to remain profitable. Its 24/7 operations are critical to its business.

"We looked at three vendors to provide us with a high availability solution," said Paul Bakutis, CIO at Ahlstrom. "We selected SafeData because we were very comfortable with the team, its iSeries and high availability expertise, its technology infrastructure and its flexibility. Not to mention that SafeData's proposal was very competitively priced."

Solution

SafeData/HA (high availability) is a cost-effective, subscription-based high availability solution for mission-critical systems.

Using iTera's Echo² replication solution, SafeData creates and maintains a mirror of Ahlstrom's legacy systems in its carrier class data center in Medford, Mass. Equipped to meet regulatory and compliance requirements, the SafeData data center hosts Ahlstrom's systems. Therefore, if the Windsor Locks or Chirnside locations experience a system failure whether it be a natural disaster, power outage or system maintenance, SafeData/HA provides a "switch ready" option to ensure access to data 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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Return on Investment

"We have been very happy with our decision to go with SafeData and its high availability solution," said Bakutis. "They have certainly lived up to their promises."

While Ahlstrom's IT team is intensely focused on the design and rollout of its new manufacturing solution, it has comfort in knowing that its existing system and legacy applications are in good hands with a team that understands its organization's business continuity requirements.

"We see SafeData as part of our IT team," said Bakutis. "We have an excellent working relationship with them. They have been extremely flexible. As we make changes, they are very accommodating and work with us to make our system work for us."