CASE STUDY: CHRISTIAN BROTHERS SERVICES

At a Glance

Customer: Christian Brothers Services

Industry: Healthcare/Insurance/Financial Services

Location: Romeoville, Illinois

Business Challenge:

- Consolidate and improve data center, backup and disaster recovery operations
- Normalize or reduce costs related to IT Infrastructure, its management and protection
- IT project backlog
- Meet HIPAA and other relevant compliance requirements

US Signal Solution:

- Redundant MPLS WAN
- Internet with Cloud Based Advanced Security+
- Enterprise Cloud for X86-64 Production Server Workloads
- Hosted Private Cloud for Horizon View VDI
- IBM I Series hosting
- EBaaS for all systems
- DRaaS for X86-64 Production Servers and IBM I Series

Business Results:

- Reduction in operational overhead and management of core IT Infrastructure, backup and disaster recovery
- Established Information Security Framework
- Predictable cost model for IT
- Increased IT resilience with lower RTO/RPO
- Increased IT responsiveness to the business

Business Challenge

Based in Illinois, Christian Brothers Services is a nonprofit organization that provides a variety of benefits programs to congregations, organizations, and dioceses throughout the United States and Canada. Two years ago, the organization's IT department found it had a perfect storm brewing. The leases on all its on-premise IT equipment were coming due. At the same time, the contract for its backup data center provider was expiring. It was the ideal time to seek out new options.

Christian Brothers Services had wanted to get out of the infrastructure business. A review of its IT infrastructure needs four years previously had found that it was almost two and a half times more cost effective to administer its own data center. Two years later, however, it was cost neutral. It made sense to outsource the entire data center along with the backup operations. Among the additional benefits Christian Brothers hoped to gain by doing so was to improve the quality of life of its IT operations staff who were often working long hours, including nights, holidays and weekends.

Still, the organization knew there would be a few challenges involved in outsourcing its data center operations. Among them: finding a provider that could deliver the same "TLC" as Christian Brothers Services' own IT team would provide. The service provider would also need an in-depth understanding of the organization's compliance requirements, particularly HIPAA. There were also concerns that needed to be addressed in terms of putting both the primary data center and backup operations in the hands of a single provider.

The US Signal Solution

Christian Brothers Services cast as wide of a net as possible to include as many service providers — and services. After the list of prospects was narrowed down and the RFP sent, US Signal was selected for the job.

As Christian Brothers Services ' CIO Tom Drez put it, "US Signal was able to put together the complete package of products, services and people. We found them to be very knowledgeable, personable and experienced and, all things being equal, we're always going to pick based on people."

Aside from the people that comprised the US Signal team that had won Christian Brothers Services over was the package of products and services they proposed. That included:

Redundant MPLS WAN – Diverse last mile and street-level route design could minimize down time associated with loss of connectivity from Christian Brothers Services' site premise to a US Signal Data Center. The use of MPLS WAN would also allow for more predictable network performance to ensure a quality end user experience.

Internet with Cloud-based Advanced Security Plus – Centralizing Internet service at the data center with protection by a Unified Threat Management (UTM) platform would provide a best-of-breed protection strategy against Internet threats to Christian Brothers Services' data network.

Enterprise Cloud – US Signal's Enterprise Cloud was proposed for Christian Brothers Services' X86-64 servers because of its high availability design, excellent performance, HIPAA-compliant ready architecture, granular scalability and affordable cost.

IBM I Series hosting/Hosted Private Cloud – A long-time staple of Christian Brothers Services' IT architecture, the IBM I series platform hosted the organization's ERP, email and file systems. Locality to their X86-64 servers was required to ensure performance, and the organization wanted an OpEx model for this system as well. Providing the I Series in a single-tenant IaaS model would accomplish both objectives. VMware's Horizon View platform was proposed for the end user computing. Due to the technical requirements of this VDI solution, a dedicated computing architecture such as Hosted Private Cloud was required.

EBaaS – US Signal's ability to provide a comprehensive backup strategy was an important component to reducing Christian Brother Services' time investment for day-to-day IT tasks. With an established framework for management, monitoring and remediation, outsourcing this service to US Signal was a logical option.

DRaaS – To meet the organization's desire for improved workload resiliency, DR services were proposed that would provide geographic diversity to a secondary warm site using a continuous data protection model. The solution would provide a much lower RTO/RPO, be fully managed by US Signal and tested twice annually.

Business Results

Among the key benefits garnered by the move to US Signal has been that Christian Brothers Services' IT operations team can be more responsive to the business rather than worrying about what the next hardware or software upgrade is going to be.

"Our focus is now on the business. We are no longer consumed by what's next on the IT roadmap," Drez explains. "Instead, we can concentrate on the next acquisition or on the next product we will deliver to the members in our plans and programs. If, for example, the healthcare division's customer services manager comes to us with an idea at 8 a.m., we can have something incubated by 2 p.m."

The Christian Brothers Services IT staff is also spending less time working beyond their normal hours since they can count on US Signal to handle management of the IT infrastructure, DR and backup. In addition, consolidating data center and backup operations with US Signal has greatly improved the organization's RTO and RPO. On average, RPO is below 20 seconds for items protected by US Signal's Zerto-based DR. The RTO for Zerto-protected items is one hour, based on the initial DR test. The biggest benefit in Tom Drez's mind, however, is that Christian Brothers Services has found a long-term partner instead of just another vendor.
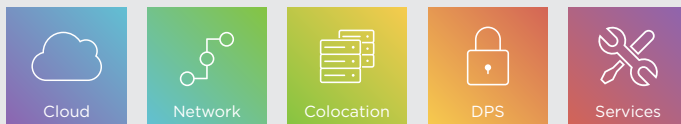
"People do make a difference, and the US Signal team has proven to be true partners we can trust. That's how we like to work," Drez says. "In our business, we want our members to look at us as extensions of their organizations. So, it works well for us to consider US Signal as an extension of our IT operations department."

Your Solution is Waiting

Learn how US Signal can create a solution tailored for your specific business needs. Call 866.2. SIGNAL or email

info@ussignal.com.

About US Signal

US Signal is a leading IT solutions provider, offering connectivity, cloud hosting, colocation, data protection, and disaster recovery services — all powered by its wholly owned and operated, robust fiber network. US Signal also helps customers optimize their IT resources through the provision of managed and professional services.

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