Ahlstrom Windsor Locks Re-evaluates its High Availability Choice and Gets More HA for Less

For several years, the IT department at Ahlstrom Windsor Locks used a well known iSeries high availability solution to replicate data from their iSeries model 720 production machine to an iSeries model 500. Ahlstrom's BPCS manufacturing and Infinium payroll application data on its production machine in Connecticut is accessed and updated in real time by its production facilities throughout the United States and Europe. Connected by high speed

About Ahlstrom Windsor Locks LLC

Ahlstrom Windsor Locks is one of 16 fiber composite manufacturing facilities of Ahlstrom Corporation. The FiberComposites division manufactures products for engine filtration, nonwovens and reinforcement composites markets worldwide. Ranked among the top 10 nonwovens manufacturers, its engineered fabrics are used in industrial products as well as everyday consumer products, such as surgical gowns, tea bags and wipes. The FiberComposites division, which is headquartered in Helsinki, Finland, employs more than 2500 people and has manufacturing sites in Europe, the Americas, and Asia.

lines to quickly send data back and forth, a transaction can be updated in a production facility in Europe and a barcode label can print in that same facility seconds later—all via its iSeries 720 located in Connecticut.

"Because we have facilities located in a several different time zones, we simply

cannot afford downtime," says Scott Blanchette, Technical Support Manager.

For the most part, Ahlstrom's high availability system (HA) did its job well and Blanchette and his staff were satisfied. But this changed when the lease expired on Ahlstrom's iSeries model 720 machine that was being used in the development environment; here's why: The decision was made to bring in a new model 820 to replace the 720, and at the same time Ahlstrom would also replace an older model 500 (the HA Backup machine). The new 820 would be partitioned with one LPAR being the development environment, and another LPAR being the backup target. This was a great plan until Blanchette learned that the HA vendor was going to charge a significant fee to license the HA software for the new machine simply because the processor level was jumping from a P20 to a P30 due to the new model 820.

Before paying this fee, Blanchette figured it was a good time to take a fresh look at the available options in the HA marketplace. Says Blanchette, "I've been working on the AS/400 since the early 90's and as far as I knew there were three players in the HA

marketplace. When I began looking around, I realized there were other alternatives."

Blanchette came across iTera's Echo² High Availability product and quickly realized that iTera provided an alternative. Echo² was not only much simpler to use, but it incorporated remote journaling technology, requiring only a small amount of the production system overhead currently needed by their existing HA solution. Says Blanchette, "We saw demos of a few different HA solutions, particularly looking for ease of use and less time to manage. We evaluated iTera's Echo² solution and quickly determined it was something that could work very well for us. We were especially encouraged that its cost was actually less than the licensing fee increase we were facing from our current HA vendor."

After having more thorough discussions with iTera, as well as talking to existing Echo² customers, Ahlstrom decided to replace its HA with Echo². Continues Blanchette, "One of the things that we really like about Echo² is the fact that everything is replicated via remote journaling so that very little HA

processing is being done on the production system. When we installed Echo², we immediately noticed a performance boost; in fact, I have my system set to page me if CPU usage goes over 65% for over 10 minutes. Now with Echo² installed, my pager goes off a whole lot less often than it did when our old HA system was installed."

Blanchette is satisfied that he found a better HA solution. "Echo² takes significantly less time to monitor. We've gone from hours a day to minutes, because it's easier to see on the monitor whether everything looks good. When there is something to be taken care of, it can be resolved more quickly. Because of this, my staff now has more time to do other IT tasks." Continues Blanchette, "We get much more personalized support from iTera, and the support technicians are not only very responsive, they are very knowledgeable about the product – you can tell they're not just reading from a manual or a troubleshooting database."

Strategic Business Systems
17 South Franklin Turnpike
Ramsey, NJ 07446   info@sbsusa.com
201-327-9400   www.sbsusa.com
Committed to Our Customers' Long Term Success

iTera Authorized Reseller