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Stephen York
Vice President and Corporate Controller
Hanover Company



The Hanover Company

Industry: Oil & Gas, Manufacturing
HQ: Houston, TX

Problem: New ERP Deployment
Solution: Assess & Rebuild Infrastructure

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Accudata Systems Rebuilds Hanover IT Infrastructure

It's a simple story really. An entrepreneurial, growth oriented company – the leading global provider of natural gas compression equipment and services – acquires forty companies over ten years, rapidly absorbing them into the corporate structure without breaking stride. Within a short period of time, the operational difficulties of integrating more than eighty six disparate operating and messaging systems, hardware platforms and desktops, as well as a multitude of different applications begins to surface. Can the company move to a single integrated ERP system, vital for effective management, with minimal impact on productivity and disruption of services?

The company is The Hanover Company, a Houston based manufacturer of natural gas compression equipment and services. With the largest rental compression fleet in the industry, Hanover provides parts and services for an installed base of compression equipment, treatment services, compressor fabrication, production equipment fabrication, and measurement services. Hanover recognized that ten years of unprecedented growth had created conditions that required it to re-assess its IT environment. It needed to create a solid IT infrastructure, properly aligned with its business strategy, to enable the company for the future.

The solution Hanover chose was two-pronged: Oracle to provide an ERP system and Accudata Systems to prepare its IT infrastructure for Oracle.

“We needed to create some standardization across the many silo based, non-integrated business units,” stated Stephen York, Vice President and Corporate Controller at The Hanover Company. “Creating a major IT infrastructure environment is a significant undertaking. We called in Accudata Systems to assist us, to look at our infrastructure and, from an engineering perspective, create a strategy to move forward with our plan to implement Oracle.”

As the primary tool for Hanover moving forward, Oracle would be fully leveraged to gain future business advantage. Additionally, the infrastructure supporting Oracle had to be capable of seamlessly delivering its services and protecting the data associated with its activities at all times. Hanover chose Accudata Systems for that work.

“I was most impressed with the responsiveness and the type of people that were brought to the table to assist us,” York continued. “Accudata Systems brought some expert talent to address a lot of different issues.”

First Step – Discovery

When Accudata Systems was first contacted by Hanover, the scope of work to prepare for Oracle implementation had yet to be determined. One of Accudata Systems' first tasks was to perform a discovery of the state of the infrastructure across Hanover's many buildings and locations.

“It was a swift and intense effort,” said Leon Barnes, Accudata Systems account manager for Hanover. “We essentially went in to help them redefine their entire network infrastructure, from communications to operating systems, servers and messaging systems.”

“Hanover has grown through acquisition and many different IT resources became part of its infrastructure -- random networks, operating systems, directory systems, messaging systems,” stated Bryan Garrison, lead systems engineer for Accudata Systems on the Hanover project. “Their network, naturally, was not a solid functioning system but kind of pieced together.”

Hanover's Houston facility serves as headquarters to this global company and

acts as the main hub to its many networks. Since the Houston campus is responsible for directing data to all WAN nodes and campus end points, Accudata devoted its immediate attention to this core network, assessing its capacity and accessibility, as well as its ability to deliver and sustain services.

“Accudata did a good job of assessing the environment,” York stated. “They gave us a roadmap to execute. They did it with talent and with a focus on the customer.”

Through the discovery effort, Accudata identified a multitude of issues impacting Hanover’s infrastructure across its seventy-five sites. Windows NT 3.51 and 4, NDS, Windows 95/98/2K, GroupWise, Exchange -- it was an infrastructure that suffered from the company’s rapid growth, typical of many organizations that experience mergers and acquisitions.

Second Step – Prioritize

Within a 2-week period, Accudata Systems had assessed the situation and itemized every issue to resolve in order to prepare Hanover for the Oracle implementation. Each issue was then reviewed and prioritized. Critical issues received first priority. From this discovery, Accudata developed forty-three initiatives in 15 categories that needed immediate resolution.

“We made that our Phase 1 plan,” stated Garrison. “Certain things had to happen before Oracle could be deployed. The workstations had to meet certain requirements. The network had to be a single protocol – TCP/IP. We came in to make that happen, to make sure Hanover could leverage Oracle to the best of its ability. At the same time, we fixed a lot of the other holes that we found.”

“Everything else, though important, became Phase 2.”

Hanover was aware of the gaps in their technology strategy and that they needed someone to come in to assess the state of their infrastructure and to provide a roadmap to move forward.

“It was very comforting to have someone come in and in a very short period of time make sense out of it and give us kind of a blueprint or a roadmap from which to move forward,” emphasized York. “Otherwise, it certainly would have taken more time and could have jeopardized our ability to meet some of the aggressive timelines.”

Third Step – Standardize

Simplicity and standardization are two keys to a secure, effective and efficient network. Establishing and maintaining corporate-wide standards in technologies, applications, and implementation methods help to assure IT success.

Reviewing and implementing standard desktop requirements for the Oracle rollout was an important piece of the project; standardizing on a specific server configuration was another. Accudata Systems recommended that Hanover standardize on Windows 2000 and Exchange 2000 with a standard desktop build, on Dell servers and a Cisco-based network infrastructure.

“We looked at what Hanover needed and what we could do with

Windows 2000,” commented Garrison. “To close the gap we decided to change the way the domains were set up and that involved a migration into a Windows 2000 domain. That is still in process. It was better to do it now than to wait.”

“We installed probably 15 new servers and rebuilt a lot of existing servers. We standardized on Dell in a specific configuration and documented how to perform the build out,” stated Garrison. “We were able then to give the documentation and servers to Hanover IT staff and they could go in and build a server. Everything was consistent.”

Accudata Systems found that the Hanover network was a multi-protocol network using IPX/SPX and TCP/IP. Because IPX did not facilitate the level of functionality Hanover needed for corporate wide deployment of Oracle, the decision was made to standardize on TCP/IP. DHCP services were also implemented along with Hanover’s Windows 2000 migration.

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“We made everything very modular,” Garrison continued. “Our plan was flexible enough to be able to respond to the changes that were going on in the whole company. Once those changes started coming down to us, we were able to reposition our pieces as well. So it fit nicely with the way that Hanover was progressing.”

Cisco products were chosen as standard for all switches and routers. The core design, components and configuration

were issues in need of immediate attention. A well-designed standard is in place for servicing the Houston campus and work continues on creating and rebuilding the remaining infrastructure for the other sites.

A Solid Infrastructure to Move Hanover Forward

After six months of intense effort, Accudata Systems has helped Hanover implement the solid foundation they need to move forward. A lot has changed in those months and will continue to change as Accudata Systems works on optimizing network services in this long-term project.

“We didn’t just come in and alleviate their pain. We came in and repaired a lot of things that could have broken further down the road,” Garrison concluded. “That was the big effort -- to centralize everything, to standardize on platforms, to set up redundant sites, and to eliminate what wasn’t needed.”

“We’re executing the plan that was laid out and it’s providing confidence not only to myself but also to the technology team and our CEO,” York asserted. “Accudata has given us a very objective view and a very solid solution for now and for the future. Their team has prepared us to be ready to implement Oracle. We put in an insurance policy to help us achieve success and that was with Accudata Systems.”