davenportgroup

Navigating Complex Network and Virtualization Solutions

Davenport Group helps Park Place Behavioral Healthcare rebuild their failing network in order to support a growing virtual environment.

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Sharon Parsons
IT Manager and Systems
Administrator

Park Place Behavioral Healthcare
Kissimmee, FL

Virtual Environment Opens New World of Expansion

"Have I mentioned how much I love my job?" said Bill Carroll, Davenport Group Senior Systems Engineer. "Things like this — getting someone out of a crisis — is why I love what I do, and where I do it."

Mr. Carroll is referring to the fact that in the middle of the night, and only within a few hours, Park Place Behavioral Healthcare (PPBHC) in Kissimmee, FL, was officially back up and running in a solid production environment.

"I was amazed and thought for sure we would be down for days," said Sharon Parsons, IT Manager and Systems Administrator at PPBHC. Plus, the EqualLogic Support with Dell EMC was awesome. As Bill suspected, I was down from 8.x TB to 6.33 TB of free space after booting everything back up."

Founded in 1976, PPBHC continues in its mission to improve the quality of life and promote wellness and recovery for those they serve. As another tool in the box to help patients make their way into recovery, PPBHC knew they had to begin making changes to their current IT infrastructure in order to meet the challenges of providing patient and counselor resources for the various needs of behavioral health.

PPBHC offers individual and group therapy, provided by counselors and clinical psychologists; case management services; rehabilitation groups; psychiatric treatment; and a detox center. Additionally, within the case management services, PPBHC offers a Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) providing assistance to homeless or at-risk individuals who have serious mental illnesses. Further, PPBHC is involved with the nearby community, doing outreach with the Osceola county school system to provide counseling.

Prior to the crash, to keep up with the non-profit's technology needs, Ms. Parsons had been working with Dell EMC and Davenport Group to architect and update PPBHC's IT infrastructure. Until recently, her team's network was an unmanaged solution with communication and bandwidth issues; running outdated Active Directory Server, with

support efforts focused on ongoing troubleshooting, assessing overall IT solutions, and a break\fix strategy. These issues continued to lead to problems with authentication and with accessing resources on the networks. They were not able to transmit reliably the maximum amount of data from one point to another over their network.

"PPBHC had fiber connections between buildings, but the bandwidth was not used efficiently, and communications were bottlenecked at the connection sources using CAT5 converters," Ms. Parsons said. "Unmanaged switches on a flat network was the normal configuration. The data center was comprised of several standalone servers using DHCP and external local hard drives for backup."

Best Practices and Strategies for Building and Managing

Troubleshooting performance issues can be like solving a mystery. Challenges faced by PPBHC during this process included spending much time isolating problems before Ms. Parsons and her team could propose a fix. She knew her first step was to organize an IT/network audit to document the technologies her team already had in place and how those technologies matched the goals for PPBHC.

"As I started fixing the datacenter issues with a new Domain Controller, Print Management, Static IPs, etc. to resolve usage\communication errors, our network started slowing instead of improving," said Ms. Parsons. "That is when I began to think that the infrastructure needed help."

As PPBHC continued to grow by adding users and equipment, their network became unstable and unreliable. While PPBHC had recently purchased hardware to support a new virtual environment due to the expected growth, they needed support for proper connection and installation.

"That is when I called Dell EMC on a regular basis for help," said Ms. Parsons. "Dell EMC recommended Davenport Group as a local support contact. That is how I found you. I did not realize how bad our infrastructure really was until Davenport Group did a network survey alongside planning for the virtual environment."

Source: http://www.aroundosceola.com

Navigate the Options

Davenport Group worked with Ms. Parsons' team, providing solutions and reviewing the importance of a reliable and well-considered network infrastructure. They systematically prepared more than one solution including the pros and cons of each; while at the same time, provided engineer level experience to each project and task's levels of planning and implementation.

"Davenport Group is always there during an emergency to help us pull through to completion," said Ms. Parsons. "In addition, and most importantly, they listen. Davenport Group Account Executive Max Rossi, Senior Systems Engineer Bill Carroll, and Network Engineer Rick Rutherford each make sure they understand what we are looking for and what we want to accomplish before they make suggestions."

Navigating the options meant facing one of PPBHC's biggest challenges: updating infrastructure from an unmanaged chaotic mess with un-configured switches, CAT5 converters, hub extensions and no documentation. Implementing a Rip-and-Replace Solution, Davenport Group provided new managed switches, fiber connections on the backbone, and VLAN configurations to isolate network traffic.

"As a result, data communication between buildings and along the backbone has improved. Now LOB applications reside in a virtual environment with the possibility of adding future LOB implementations with ease and efficiency."

> Davenport Group worked with the Park Place Behavioral Healthcare C-level executive team, explaining the **importance of a reliable and well-considered network infrastructure**; as well as implementing new solutions. Davenport Group systematically provided more than one solution including the pros and cons of each; while at the same time, **providing engineer level experience to each project** and task at all levels of planning and implementation.

"Davenport Group continues to serve PPBHC by quoting and providing replacement workstations, negotiating hardware and software support renewals, and providing licensing renewals and purchases all at a reasonable cost. They also check on us on a regular basis to make sure we have what we need to succeed," said Ms. Parsons.

Prevent Operational Headaches

The latest project involved a middle-of-the-night recovery from a datastore crash in PPBHC's virtual environment. Max Rossi responded to the crash within minutes at 2 a.m. with a quote for additional hardware when Ms. Parsons' first thought that was their only option for recovery.

"Your VMware/EqualLogic engineer, Bill Carroll, was available to assist before the sun came up and remained on task until we recovered enough space to bring the datastore back on-line," said Ms. Parsons. "I really thought our systems would be down for days while we purchased and installed new hardware, but we recovered from this crisis within 24 hours. Now we have time to plan for additional hardware and implementation."

Today, PPBHC's network backbone is substantially more reliable, with more stability and speed. The virtual environment has allowed them to grow, offering more tools to their employees and clients; and produce efficient backup and recovery processes. Now, instead of chasing fires, an added bonus includes more time to analyze where they are, and plan for where they need to go.

"Davenport Group made sure they understood our business model and what we wanted to accomplish before making recommendations," said Ms. Parsons. "We have very specific requirements for some of our LOB applications, which Davenport Group always keeps in mind when we approach a new project."

What is PPBHC now able to offer as a result of the upgrade? Growth. Developing a solid tech strategy now allows for PPBHC to embrace a systematic process for evaluating their technology goals and requirements before putting their plans into effect. PPBHC was at the point of a hiring freeze because their systems could not handle any additional load.

"The virtual environment has opened a new world of expansion for new and changing services. Hardware costs and space requirements no longer hinder decision-making. The Rapid Recovery system has provided not only ease of mind, but also off-site storage. Furthermore, we now have an official Disaster Recovery Site that was not available in the past," said Ms. Parsons.

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Source: Google Photos