

case study

hosted solution, reliable results

CLIENT



INDUSTRY

Farm Food Production

SERVICES

 consulting

 internet

 data center

THE CHALLENGE

L&M's internal hosting presented issues resulting in inconsistent technology services and disruption of business operations.

THE SOLUTION

celito provides L&M Companies with co-location of network servers and a highly flexible, integrated, email exchange solution, resulting in reliable technology services for L&M's operations.

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OVERVIEW

L&M Companies is rooted in a history of produce farming and packaging. Since its founding in 1964, L&M has built a business grounded in integrity and long-term relationships in farming and packaging produce for sales and delivery across the country. The company's early farming ventures started in Florida, and today L&M operates farms in many of the major growing areas throughout the United States, including five significant operations sites: an Apple Division in Washington; a site in Nogales, Arizona, for importing products from Mexico; a location in Texas where limes and mangos are grown; a location in Colorado where onions are grown; and farming operations in Moultrie, Georgia. In addition, smaller packing sheds are spread across the country.

Growth in production over four decades of hard work naturally was accompanied by growth in operations and services to support the business. One such area of growth was technology infrastructure. Just over three years ago, L&M Director of Information Technology Erik Larsen realized the company would need to make some decisions regarding its needs in this critical area.

CELITO CHALLENGE

L&M had been experiencing overheating issues with its network servers. The HVAC, or heating and cooling system, wasn't providing enough cooling for the machines running its technology services. L&M realized that if the servers were to overheat, they could shut down. L&M couldn't assume that risk with shipping operations needing access to

information systems 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Power redundancy was also a concern. Without any type of generator backup system in place, L&M was simply out of luck if the servers went down. According to Larsen, he had two options: upgrade the HVAC system as well as adding a generator; or host the servers outside the company with an IT co-location hosting service.

"I was kind of new to the organization at the time," Larsen recalls, "but I had come from an organization where we had successfully outsourced our data center for our ERP system (Enterprise Resource Planning). I had the same type of solution in mind for L&M when I arrived, but I also knew I would have to explain the cost to benefit to executive management."

Larsen prepared a business case, detailing the short- and long-term risks of keeping

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operations in-house and the benefits of co-location. He also understood management's slight hesitancy to make the switch from internal to external server hosting.

"As an IT person, I know the concerns and potential risks better than anyone," he explains, "and so, since the recommendation and ultimate implementation sits on my desk, I absolutely want to make sure it's a solid decision." Although co-locating the servers would mean an additional expense, it also would mean savings in power, time, and communications, as well as ensuring business continuity, which was of particular importance.

In the end, executive management agreed the best solution was to co-locate their servers, and for this, they looked to a number of different local companies for their solutions. After a few months of researching various businesses, it came down to a short list of three, which included celito. Site visits were made to each vendor's location.

"I really liked celito," Larsen says. "We felt important to them, unlike with some of the other IT companies, where we would be just one rack out of hundreds in the room. Even though they have a significant presence and business, celito's approach felt more like a boutique operation, where they really tailored solutions to our needs. And they didn't nickel and dime us on the pricing.

"We simply had a good chemistry with them, too," he adds. "I got the feeling they would be great to work with. When it comes down to it, so much of choosing to do business with someone has to do with the

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THE SOLUTION

One of the things that impressed Larsen the most about celito from the start was celito's willingness to work with L&M and to help the company ensure a successful transition of its servers.

A produce business, L&M operates shipments from coast-to-coast virtually 24/7. For the server move, Larsen had to shut down technology operations Saturday afternoon and complete the full migration Saturday night and Sunday. Appropriate



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testing would need to be successfully completed for show time first thing Monday morning. There was little room for error. Thanks to celito and the work of Larsen's team, the transition couldn't have gone smoother.

"We used celito's truck and their team to help move the equipment from our office to celito's site," he recalls. "But there is so much more involved than just physically moving the servers. We had a full rack to transition — mounting, wiring, networking — and you just hope it all works the way it should. There are a lot of details, but we got it up and running, and all before our Monday morning deadline.

"Their guys (celito's) and our guys were there all through the night, including myself and Sharat (celito's CEO), to give us anything we needed — cables, supplies and the like — and to help us at every turn," he says. "We had a lot of work to do before Monday morning and failure or delays were not options."

celito now houses L&M's headquarters data center that operates the company's entire organization, including its ERP system and

email exchange. Larsen and his six-member IT team have been pleased with the relationship, especially, as Larsen says, "because there is never any sort of surprise with celito, from project planning and implementation to pricing and billing."

FLEXIBILITY AND SERVICE

L&M first approached celito regarding its servers, but about a year later, they presented celito with a unique need of great importance: L&M wanted a flexible email exchange — a hosted solution, but one that would allow L&M to integrate its Active Directory. Just about all hosted email solutions they looked at didn't provide for that integration, which would mean maintaining two lists and resulting in numerous security issues. Just about all, that is, but celito's.

"Celito offered us an incredibly flexible solution," Larsen says. "They understood we wanted a hosted solution, but that we also wanted control over it. They worked with us

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on an agreement, in which they owned the servers and software, etcetera, and they host it, but it's in our network and shares our Active Directory. So it has all the benefits we wanted. It's really a very good solution, and we've been very happy with it and their flexibility."

On a couple of other occasions, L&M has needed additional server resources, once in short order and celito was again there to help. L&M needed to restore old backup tapes from a different environment (pre hosted exchange days) in a small window of time. Celito was able to mimic L&M's old environment so it could restore mailboxes with the ability to retrieve old messages.

"They were very fair with us on pricing, very flexible, and really helped us out in the time of need," Larsen remarks, adding that another time celito rented additional servers to L&M in quick turnaround for an ERP system implementation. "We desperately needed to get it up and running in a couple of days. Eager to help, celito fired up other servers

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in no time at all; I don't think we would have gotten that kind of flexibility, response, and service with another organization."

"Fortunately for me and L&M," he reflects, "celito has been rock solid since day one of our relationship, and that's really helped me out — a hosted solution we can rely on, and a company whose flexibility and service are all about the customer's needs."

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Proudly rooted in Raleigh, NC celito is a NC telecommunications company committed to the communities and the clients we serve. With more than a decade of experience in telecommunications and a wide client base, celito is your top choice when searching for a reliable, local internet service provider. Visit celito.net or call 919.852.1238 to learn more about our capabilities and how we can help your business succeed.

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