

Scan Alarms & Security Systems

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David Allen, Managing Director, Scan Alarms

Business Profile

Company Name:
Scan Alarms & Security Systems
(UK) Ltd.

Headquarters:
Newtownabbey, Northern Ireland

Industry:
Electronic security

Founded:
1980

Business Environment:

- Regarded as one of the largest privately owned electronic security firms in Northern Ireland.
- Needs to respond quickly to customer security issues at all hours of the day and night.
- Employs 40 people including field service technicians, and administrative personnel.
- Strives to use electronic technology instead of paper forms wherever possible.

Vision Solutions Product:
Double-Take® Availability™

Implementation Partner:
Adson Group and Vision Solutions

Critical issue

A growing dependency on information technology that was, in part, propelled by the implementation of wireless PDAs for field dispatch, increased the level of vulnerability if a failure occurred. A single RAID 5 configured server with three hard drives did not provide enough resiliency and recoverability.

Results

- Installed two new servers locally and installed Double-Take Availability on both of them.
- Implemented the entire solution in just three days.
- Replicates production data to local backup servers in real time.
- Conducted several successful test recoveries to prove the viability of the solution.

Technologies

- Double-Take Availability
- Microsoft Windows
- Microsoft Exchange Server
- Security event logging applications
- RAID 5 Array

Business Challenge

Scan Alarms was formed in 1980 by two brothers, David and Edward Allen, and specializes in providing electronic security systems for commercial, industrial and domestic premises, including intruder alarms, fire alarms, CCTV, access control and other security solutions. Scan Alarms has grown to become one of the largest privately owned electronic security companies in Northern Ireland with 40 employees operating out of its Newtownabbey head office.

To provide its customers with the highest level of service, one of Scan Alarms' business goals was to move away from inefficient paper-based systems and, as far as possible, operate electronically. This goal is of particular value to service engineers, who traditionally held paperwork for each customer, only visiting head office on a weekly or fortnightly basis to return paperwork for processing. Engineers now carry HP iPAQ wireless PDAs and can undertake all administrative duties remotely, ensuring maximum productivity and speedy response to customer issues.

As a result, by November 2006 Scan Alarms' business had become heavily reliant on IT. In addition to day-to-day administrative information, all customer records, such as quotes, installation schemes and service records were stored on a single RAID 5 configured server of three hard drives. When one of the three hard drives failed, although no data was lost and the company's operation was not affected, concern was raised that if more than one drive had failed the company's operational ability would have been severely compromised.

These concerns were fully realized when, just a few months later, the RAID controller failed. With the server approaching its sixth year of service, the spare part was almost impossible for Scan Alarms' IT partner, Asdon Group, to source and as a result the server could not be repaired for nearly three days.

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David Allen, managing director of Scan Alarms, recalls the event, “The loss of the server played havoc with our business, not only during the failure but afterwards while we caught up. I was particularly concerned that our reputation for good customer service would be compromised, as we could not pass customer faults to our service engineers.”

Solution

While Adson Group consultants were on site, Scan Alarms asked its partner to suggest solutions that would guarantee high availability of its core IT systems in the future. Asdon had already selected Vision Solutions as a trusted solution provider, enabling them to offer a high availability platform with disaster recovery options suitable for Northern Ireland’s SMBs. Vision Solutions’ products enable data to be continuously replicated from a primary server to a remote, backup, server and in the event of an IT failure, initiate failover to the backup machine.

Asdon suggested two possible high availability infrastructures to Scan Alarms; continuous replication of data on Scan Alarms’ server to a remote disaster recovery location or to a backup server within Scan Alarms’ premises. The local high availability solution offered all the functionality that Scan Alarms required and saved the expense of managing a remote disaster recovery site. As a result, Scan Alarms purchased two new servers, located them within their own premises and installed Double-Take Availability.

Asdon implemented the complete high availability infrastructure in just three days. Following which numerous tests were undertaken to prove the capabilities of the technology, including forcing failover by manually removing power and Ethernet cables. No data was lost during the tests and the failover and failback procedures worked seamlessly.

According to co-founder David Allen, “Double-Take Availability gives us complete confidence that if our primary server were to ever fail again, all of the business’s essential data will remain available, our staff will have uninterrupted access to customer records, calls will be logged and information passed to service engineers. Ultimately, we now have the tools to ensure that the Scan Alarm’s commitments to its customers can always be met.”



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◆ High Availability ◆ Disaster Recovery ◆ Systems and Data Management ◆