

Barry-Wehmiller

"MIMIX opened people's eyes to the ability—and the need—to have the system up and running quickly after a major failure."

Claude Stoltz, Manger of Enterprise Applications, Barry-Wehmiller

Business Profile

Company Name:
Barry-Wehmiller Companies, Inc.

Headquarters:
St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Industry:
Manufacturing Technology and
Services

Revenue:
\$1 Billion

Employees:
5,400

Founded:
1885

Business Environment:

- Supplies manufacturing technology & services
- Operates globally
- Requires almost 24/7 system availability
- Uses Infor ERP XA (formerly MAPICS)

Vision Solutions Product:
MIMIX Availability

Implementation Team:
Vision Solutions and Barry-Wehmiller

Critical issue

Barry-Wehmiller operates in time zones around the world, meaning that almost all hours are business hours. As a result, downtime is very costly at almost any time of day.

Yet, system downtime is inevitable. Beyond rare disasters and critical system failures, regular maintenance, such as nightly backups, can halt applications for hours. Clearly, the organization needed a way to ensure that system downtime, whether planned or unplanned, doesn't create business downtime.

Results

- Virtually eliminates downtime required for backups
- Allows for rapid resumption of operations after disasters
- Provides peace-of-mind

Technologies

- MIMIX Availability
- IBM i
- Infor ERP XA
- 2 x IBM Power6 550 servers

Business Challenge

Barry-Wehmiller is a global supplier of manufacturing technologies and services with facilities on five continents. Its operating units focus on packaging automation equipment, engineering and IT consulting, corrugating equipment, and paper converting equipment.

When workers in Brussels, Belgium break for lunch, folks in St. Louis, Missouri, USA are just waking up, and people in Sydney, Australia are relaxing at home after a hard day's work. Because Barry-Wehmiller is a global corporation that supports many of its critical business functions with applications running on systems in the central United States, it has no time for system downtime.

Yet, up until about 2006, the company had no option but to accept downtime. Nightly backups were required to protect the company's vital data, but the backup tasks' impact on business systems was becoming intolerable for this worldwide, around-the-clock enterprise. To meet this challenge, Barry-Wehmiller needed a way to backup its data without the need to shut down or curtail business applications.

In addition, like every organization, Barry-Wehmiller faced the possibility of natural disasters or serious system failures that might halt its vital business applications. Whereas maintenance can be scheduled at a time when it will have the least impact, unplanned downtime occurs at random times. It is just as likely to strike when it will do the most damage to a company's bottom line as when it will do the least. To protect business continuity and profitability, Barry-Wehmiller needed a solution that would allow it to rapidly recovery from disasters with little or no loss of data.

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Solution

Barry-Wehmiller overcame these data and application availability challenges with the help of MIMIX Availability. In 2006, the company started using MIMIX Availability to create and maintain real-time replicas of its OS/400-based (now IBM i) systems to allow for rapid recovery in the event of a critical system failure or disaster. Today, MIMIX Availability protects approximately two terabytes of data that is managed by Infor ERP XA and third-party applications.

The company has two primary data centers, one in St. Louis, Missouri and another in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Some production applications run on an IBM i-based Power Systems server in St. Louis and others run on an identical server in Green Bay. MIMIX Availability monitors activity on both systems and replicates all data and application changes made in one location to a replica partition on the system in the other location. Thanks to this high availability environment, should a disaster occur in either location, Barry-Wehmiller can quickly resume operations by switching users affected by the outage to the backup partition in the other location.

Disasters and major hardware failures are rare, but in February 2009, Barry-Wehmiller proved the worth of MIMIX Availability. At about 3:30 p.m. on a Tuesday afternoon the system in St. Louis died without warning. Because IBM support promised that it could have the system back online by that evening, the IT staff at Barry-Wehmiller decided not to switchover to the Green Bay site.

Once IBM replaced one of the two processors in the failed system it was returned to production as quickly as promised. However, the same thing happened the next afternoon. This time, Barry-Wehmiller didn't take any chances. It insisted that IBM replace both processors, along with the motherboard and power supply. In the meantime, the company initiated a switchover to the system in Green Bay. The switchover was completed in about an hour, plus some additional time to confirm that everything was working as it should, with minimal loss of data.

Within hours, users were able to resume use of the ERP application and business was up and running again at the more than 11 locations that depended on it. Full operations continued on the Green Bay system for three days. While all operations were running on the system in Green Bay, the company maintained an adequate level of performance by activating the capacity-on-demand feature on its IBM Power Systems server.

The company doesn't have a dollar estimate of the cost of downtime, but the production systems that normally run on the St. Louis system alone support approximately 500 concurrent users at about 16 locations and half a dozen business units.

Claude Stoltz, Manager of Enterprise Applications, explains, "We could probably afford a few hours of downtime, but anything beyond that would definitely have a major impact on the company. If people can't access their data they can't take customer calls, they can't take purchase orders, they can't print POs, and they can't perform information queries. Anything beyond an hour or so of downtime could begin to cripple the business."

After that experience, Stoltz feels that the most important advice that he can give other companies is, "Never say, 'It won't happen to us!'" He also recommends that companies consider all pieces of technology in their high availability environment. For example, he found that the company had not been prepared to host as many additional Terminal Services users in Green Bay as was necessary during the downtime event.

MIMIX has also eliminated the need for the downtime that used to be required to backup the company's data. Because an up-to-the-moment replica of all production data is available on the other system, backups can be taken from the replica, without affecting production operations.



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