



People • Service • Environment

NORCAL WASTE SYSTEMS, INC.

“With Vision Director, I know exactly what my programmers are doing: I can get information easily and efficiently on what jobs were run at what times and I can see the size of system objects and libraries. We’re saving storage space and avoiding problems like latency issues and application hold-ups.”

Mike McLaughlin, Director of Operations, Norcal Waste Systems

Business Profile

Company Name:
Norcal Waste Systems, Inc.

Headquarters:
San Francisco, California (USA)

Industry:
Solid waste management

Employees:
Approximately 2,100 (Norcal and more than 20 subsidiaries)

Business Environment:

- Recycling pioneer founded in 1921
- 100 percent employee-owned and operated
- One of the largest solid-waste companies in the U.S.
- Exclusive solid waste service provider in San Francisco, also serving Silicon Valley and other communities

Implementation Team:
Key Information Systems, Inc.

Vision Solutions Products:

- Vision Director
- ORION HA for i5/OS

Critical Issue

Solid waste management is a vital community requirement, often listed with such services as fire fighting and power generation. With its headquarters in San Francisco, Norcal Waste Systems was aware that ensuring business continuity in the event of an earthquake or other emergency was a wise move. The employee-owned and operated company also recognized that monitoring and optimizing its IBM System i environment could increase efficiency and productivity.

Results

- Reduced storage requirements and costs.
- Increased IT team efficiency and productivity.
- Supports effective IT planning for storage space and task management.
- Provides IT system continuity for a business that provides a vital regional service.

Technologies

- Vision Director™
- ORION HA for i5/OS®
- IBM® System i
- Oracle® JD Edwards®
- Citrix® thin-client environment
- In-house developed customer service software
- Variety of Web applications served to customers

Business Challenge

It’s definitely not “garbage in, garbage out,” at Norcal Waste Systems, Inc. With some of the most innovative recycling programs in the country, “garbage in, value out” more aptly describes Norcal’s services, including material recovery facilities, construction and demolition debris recycling, and large-scale composting of food and organic wastes.

Norcal’s employee owners work to ensure that every company effort, from the management of its data systems to ongoing customer service, is handled with excellence. The company serves more than 570,000 residential and 55,000 commercial customers, and business continuity and IT efficiency are critical company issues.

“Before we implemented high availability, if the data systems at our San Francisco headquarters had gone down, it could have taken multiple days to get the IT end of our business running again,” said Oscar Campos, Lead Operator at Norcal. “We’re running an in-house-developed customer service system, JD Edwards financials, and Web applications that we serve out to customers. It was clear that we needed a way to get these vital systems up and running much more quickly in the event of a disruption,” Campos added.



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In addition, Norcal became aware that optimization could be valuable for its IBM System i environments. “Before we implemented replication software, we needed to do some cleaning up, and we saw that an operational tool could help us do that efficiently,” Campos stated. “Also, we had an incident with our development partition where a test billing took nearly 97 percent of the disk storage space. That was a red flag that we needed to keep a closer eye on things,” he added.

Solution

To select the right high availability and optimization solutions, Norcal turned to Key Information Systems, Inc., an IBM Premier Business Partner. Key Systems recommended ORION HA for i5/OS and Vision Director, from Vision Solutions. The implementations were handled by Key Systems and went very smoothly, according to Campos.

Norcal replicates data from San Francisco to its site in Vacaville, California. “We have 3 LPARs on our IBM i550 in San Francisco, and we recently added a third partition to our i520 in Vacaville for development. We perform periodic tests for integrity, and I’m glad to report to say we’ve gone through five successful tests of ORION HA,” Campos said.

“We like that ORION HA allows us to pick and choose what we want to replicate,” Campos reported. “For example, when we start to replicate to our new development partition, we can prioritize it, and could do it when there is less traffic,” Campos explained.

Vision Director helps increase efficiency and productivity for the Norcal IT team and for Norcal’s staff of developers. “I don’t need to watch the System i as much, and I can focus on other projects. And we can see the sizes of objects and libraries rapidly on screen without having to run time-consuming reports,” Campos said.

One of the primary uses of Vision Director at Norcal is to keep an eye on what the programmers are doing, stated Mike McLaughlin, Director of Operations at Norcal. “It helps with job tracking—we can see exactly when jobs were submitted—and we can also identify storage issues to keep costs under control,” McLaughlin said.

Norcal IT recovered 257GB out of one expansion tower with the help of Vision Director, Campos noted. “That was about 20 percent of the space in that particular tower and saved us more than \$12,000,” he said.

“With ORION HA, we’re prepared to keep Norcal systems on line in the event of an emergency. And Vision Director helps us avoid internal ‘emergencies’ like storage space problems,” Campos concluded.



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