Company

ROEL Construction is a family-owned company renowned for delivering timely, cost-effective projects throughout the western United States for over 90 years.

Objective

Upgrade the company's IT infrastructure while reducing operational expenses and implementing a disaster recovery plan.

Solution Details

▸ Outsourced to the Zumasys Cloud Computing platform

▸ Transitioned 5 TB of data and 20 virtual servers to Zumasys

▸ Tuned Citrix and VMware environment

▸ Replicated all data and servers to a second data center out of state

Company

ROEL Construction is a family-owned company that has delivered excellence in construction since 1917. Headquartered in San Diego, ROEL has earned a solid reputation for delivering large scale construction projects throughout the western United States. Currently, more than 55 percent of the company's 350+ person staff works remotely out of four regional offices and various active job sites.

Objective

While ROEL has always had a full-service, in-house IT department, as the economy changed in 2009, the company was looking for ways to reduce costs but was facing the need to upgrade its infrastructure. ROEL already had an existing virtual server environment, but needed to expand its storage footprint due to the construction industry's long-term storage and retention requirements

Additionally, ROEL had an increasingly business critical need for disaster recovery. Implementing disaster recovery was not only a smart business planning decision, but it was also something that certain ROEL customers were starting to require. As a result, putting an effective disaster recovery system in place became a high priority for upper management, but the company had previously been unable to make the necessary equipment and co-location investments.

Solution

ROEL first started working with Zumasys in early 2009 on optimizing its Citrix environment. By December of that year, ROEL decided to transition to cloud computing instead of investing in new equipment and once again turned to Zumasys for assistance. Kevin Fitzpatrick, IT Director at ROEL, determined that outsourcing his server infrastructure offered an important opportunity for cost savings and would enable him to better use his resources. "Zumasys gave us the flexibility to make our hosted solution whatever we needed it to be, unlike the large cloud computing providers we considered, " remarks Fitzpatrick. He also cites the cost-effectiveness and personalized service of Zumasys as key drivers for selection.

ROEL elected to do a slow migration to ensure everything went smoothly in transitioning its complex virtual environment. Zumasys brought data storage equipment directly to ROEL's San Diego offices and gradually moved its servers over a 3-4 week period. Once everything had been migrated and the system had been up and running for a period of 7-10 days, the storage appliance was shut down at 6pm on a Friday evening and physically moved to the Zumasys data center. By Sunday, everything was up and running remotely. In total, the company moved five terabytes of data and 20 virtual servers. The company's SQL servers, accounting systems, and email are now all running at the data center on Zumasys' VMware-based platform.

Results

- Enabled anytime, anywhere access to company systems
- Saved $70,000 a year in equipment, maintenance and operational costs and one IT staff position (This savings is on top of ROEL's already reduced annual energy costs, lowered by 80%, from their prior VMware implementation)
- Implemented a solid disaster recovery plan with no additional expenses or IT management required
- Created ability to grow or shrink resources to meet changing business demands
- Established predictable monthly IT costs

One of the added benefits of transitioning to the hosted environment was that it enabled ROEL to instantly put a disaster recovery system in place. Rather than having to invest in a separate disaster recovery strategy, it came as an inherent part of the company's partnership with Zumasys — with all of ROEL's servers and data automatically replicated to the Zumasys Las Vegas co-location facility.

In addition to managing its hosted environment, ROEL has also continued to turn to Zumasys for help tuning the company's Citrix and VMware environments, as well as for counsel and recommendations on more sophisticated technical problems.

Results

With its transition to a hosted environment, ROEL has enabled anytime, anywhere access to company systems for all of its employees. This was a critical advantage given the large proportion of the company's workforce located at remote offices and job sites. "Now if we have problems at the corporate office, we aren't taking down the whole company," states Fitzpatrick. The company also saw an improvement in speed with the move. "We had overburdened our previous system and were seeing a lot of slowness. When we went live the only calls we got were from people telling us that things were running a lot faster. For me, that meant we had achieved one of our biggest goals — our end users were seeing an improvement," Fitzpatrick adds.

By transitioning to cloud computing, ROEL has been able to save $70,000 a year based on reduced equipment, maintenance and operational costs. This savings is on top of ROEL's already reduced annual energy costs, lowered by 80%, from their prior VMware implementation a few years ago. As a result of these savings, Fitzpatrick was able to avoid having to downsize one of the jobs in his department despite the slow-down in the building industry. With cloud computing, ROEL also has now established a more predictable monthly IT cost that improves budgeting and financial planning.

According to Fitzpatrick, "One of the greatest things about this transition to the hosted environment is that we've been able to get out of the infrastructure business and stay focused on managing IT." Instead of running storage and other equipment, the IT team can now focus its time on managing projects and new implementations. The company has also repurposed much of its existing equipment, which provided additional cost savings on new equipment purchases.

"Disaster recovery was previously such a headache for me. We had so much data and were going to have to coordinate additional equipment and co-location. I was short staffed as it was. It was just so much easier to go with a provider that could offer both the hosting and the disaster recovery all in one," notes Fitzpatrick.

Moving forward, ROEL is looking at ways to expand its use of virtualization for additional IT efficiencies. In an effort to further improve remote accessibility, the company plans to explore virtual desktops for its job sites. With its recent implementation of the latest version of Citrix, ROEL will be transitioning to the new Citrix XenDesktop in the near future.

For Fitzpatrick, moving to the Zumasys hosted solution was really the most critical step in ensuring ROEL's future-readiness. As he explains, "We are going to come out of this economic slump. I want to make sure ROEL comes out of it strong and ready to grow again. In a hosted environment, I have the flexibility to expand or reduce resources as we need to and I don't have to worry about the equipment side of things. Zumasys handles that for me — and a whole lot more." ■