

HANS CONTINENTAL SMALLGOODS

Hans Continental Smallgoods (Hans Smallgoods) is a leading Australian Smallgoods Manufacturer, producing quality ham, bacon, salami, sausages, franks and fresh pork products for retail chains and food service customers throughout Australia. Hans Fresh, the fresh pork division of Hans Smallgoods, supplies premium pork cuts.



THE BUSINESS NEED

As companies grow, business complexity increases. Likewise, the more complex a business, the greater becomes its dependence on its hardware infrastructure and the applications that handle business critical activities.

Since 2004, Hans Smallgoods has grown from 2 sites in Brisbane, Australia to seven sites – 4 manufacturing facilities and 3 distribution centers - operating in two different time zones 24/7. The company receives orders from its largest retail customers, Woolworths and Coles, via EDI, and runs all production, inventory and order fulfillment activities relating to every customer order through applications running on the IBM System i.

Hans Smallgoods' IT Manager, Dennis Arnold, is keenly aware of both the risks inherent in such a comprehensive dependence on IT systems and the cost of any disruption to that system's operation. "Our system used to be down for 60-90 minutes every night for back-ups. We had people at 7 sites sitting and waiting for back-ups to finish. That's a significant cost," he says, adding that an interruption of 3 hours is the maximum his company can sustain without serious consequences. "Some orders we receive today are for delivery tomorrow, so we need to pick the order tonight. If that order stream stops we start missing orders."

THE DECISION

In addition to leveraging the IBM System i as its hardware platform, Hans Smallgoods also mitigated the risk of unplanned downtime by investing in an uninterruptible power supply. While the success of this approach did make the IT department's case for a high availability (HA) solution more difficult to make, company executives were quick to recognize the potentially devastating consequences should the system go offline for any reason. Any level of risk, they realized, was too great.

In 2006, following advice from their respected IBM hardware suppliers Computer Merchants, Hans Smallgoods evaluated *noMax and two other System i-based HA solutions on the basis of three criteria: functionality, cost and support. Making the most of Maximum Availability's offer of a free *noMax trial prior to purchase, the IT team implemented and configured the product, testing it with real-world data. "We wanted to see how it was to install, configure and use on a day-to-day basis," says Arnold. "And we needed to know how transparent the replication process was, what administration was required, and what would happen if anything went wrong with the replication process during object resynchronization on the HA machine."

On the strength of that trial, which underscored *noMax's functionality, ease-of-use and Maximum Availability's support, and

because the *noMax solution is smartly priced and – as Arnold puts it - one of the "new generation" of HA applications that leverages remote journaling on the OS400 operating system, Hans Smallgoods selected *noMax garrison.

THE OUTCOME

In response to their rapid growth from 2004 to 2006, Hans Smallgoods had purchased an IBM System i Model 520 to replace its older Model 820 as their production machine. With the purchase of *noMax garrison, the Model 820 became the company's HA machine.

Since implementing *noMax in 2006, Arnold's IT team generally replicates data from the production machine to the HA machine, though Arnold points out that he opted for the *noMax garrison product specifically for its ability to facilitate two-way data replication should the need arise to move the back-up HA machine to the production role.

One of the biggest impacts Arnold notes is increased efficiency - uptime. "We no longer take the machine down for over an hour every night to do tape backups. We do all the backups on the HA machine, so we give users at all our sites access to the System i and software applications 24 hours per day."

Though less measurable, risk reduction and peace of mind are critical benefits to Arnold as well. "We know the HA machine is constantly updated, so we can sleep easier knowing that the company's information assets are protected." And as for day-to-day administration, Arnold says *noMax is a "hands off" solution. "We look at it once a day to ensure that the replication is fully updated, but we hardly ever touch it. We couldn't be happier with the products performance and outstanding support."

"The software is extremely reliable and robust, and Maximum Availability's staff are very knowledgeable and quick to respond. I wish I could say that about all our software vendors."

Dennis Arnold, IT Manager
Hans Continental Smallgoods

