

WALKERS SHORTBREAD LIMITED

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Paul Johnson, IT Manager, Walkers Shortbread

THE BUSINESS NEED

Walkers Shortbread continues the family tradition that started in 1898 making the finest quality shortbread, oatcakes, biscuits, cakes and other Scottish bakery specialties. Increasing demand for its delicious and all-natural products has seen the company expand to distribution in over 80 markets around the world. Walkers’ now produces over 2,000 SKU’s and includes distribution to a majority of the UK’s grocery chains, prestigious London stores, world-wide hotel groups and airport terminals.

Walkers bake and package its products at factories in Aberlour and Elgin in the heart of the Scottish Highlands. To support its business operations, Walkers uses Infor’s ERP System 21 Aurora software running on the IBM i operating system and IBM Power Systems servers. The IBM system and associated applications are a key part of managing production, payroll and other accounting functions.

Late winter snow brought down power lines in the vicinity of Aberlour, causing a prolonged power outage that ultimately lasted for 3 days. This affected the offices housing the company’s ERP system, but not the factory where the back-up box was located. Walkers was relieved to have had the forethought to prepare for just such a situation and it took only a matter of minutes to switch from the main to back-up box. “Our biggest concerns when the power outage occurred were maintaining prompt order processing and meeting payroll commitments,” says Johnson. “We must process orders and meet time-sensitive delivery deadlines and at Walkers we work as a team”. The company continued to operate on the back-up box for the best part of a week and this allowed a controlled return to the primary machine and re-setting of data.

THE VALUE OF MAXAVA HA

Disaster preparation paid off. Johnson had previously worked with Maxava’s Partner, Onyx Group, to select and implement disaster recovery software, hardware and procedures for critical IBM software systems. During the product selection process, Walkers insisted that the Disaster Recovery software be “switch ready”. After consulting with the Onyx Group, Walkers selected

Maxava HA Enterprise to provide real-time disaster recovery for the IBM i environment. To support the business resiliency initiative, Walkers purchased a new IBM i model 525 server; the existing production IBM 520 became the backup machine and was moved to another Walkers location nearby. The Onyx Group installed the IBM servers and Maxava HA, migrated live applications to this new IBM Power System and developed Role Swap and Failover procedures to ensure DR readiness had been achieved.

Michael Clark, of Onyx explained “The distinction between Role Swap and Failover is key. In a Failover scenario, the primary system becomes unavailable with little or no notice. In this case steps are required to quickly swap live processing to the secondary system and when the primary system becomes available again to revert back to the primary system. With the correct procedures in place, Maxava HA functionality handles returning to the original Primary system with a minimum of fuss whilst maintaining data integrity.”

If Walkers had not been prepared with Maxava HA, the company would have had to fall back on manual processes for capturing orders and processing its payroll. “It’s really a case of the consequences of not having Maxava HA,” says Johnson. “We need to keep taking orders, keep paying people, and keep everything up-to-date no matter what happens. Maxava HA ensures that we can keep working if one of the boxes fails for any reason, server issues, fire, power; it’s as simple as that.” Walkers have since implemented a power generator to supply the head office which greatly lessens the impact a future power outage could have on operations.

Walkers Shortbread Limited is a four time winner of the Queen’s Award for Enterprise, one of the UK’s most prestigious accolades for business success. “Walkers has built a solid reputation for quality and excellence and it’s important to ensure the systems that support the organization are always available” Johnson comments. “We’re very happy with Maxava HA and with the Onyx Group. We wanted a solution that would allow us to flick the switch, go to the other box and users would be able to carry on with their work. Maxava HA does this, just like it says ‘on the tin’.”