

SUCCESS STORY

Wheeler Manufacturing diminishes risk and improves performance with CHARON-AXP



The Challenge

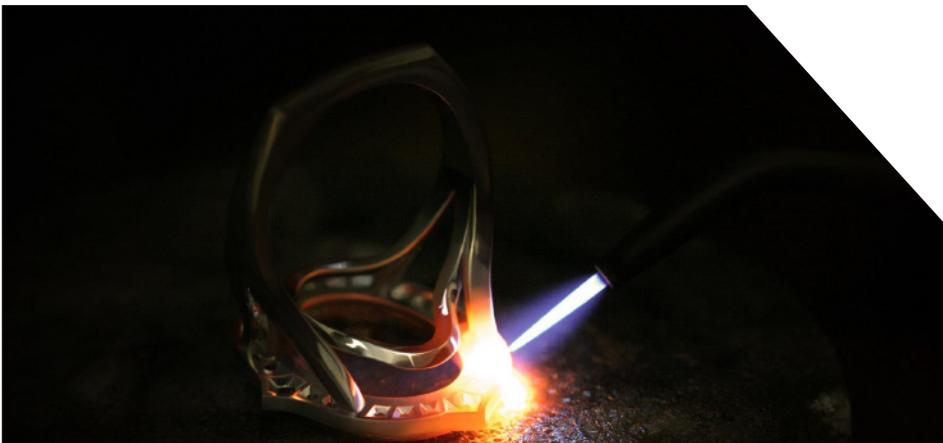
In 2014, one of the drives in the business-critical AlphaServer at Wheeler Manufacturing failed. This was not the first time a drive had failed, but it was the first time it had happened during business hours. Wheeler lost a day of production in addition to everything on the drive – and it took three or four days to receive the necessary support from HP.

Over the 15 years that Wheeler Manufacturing had been using the AlphaServer, it had proved itself to be a relatively reliable system. When it did have a problem, which was once every year or two, getting support quickly was a challenge. Wheeler is located in a remote part of South Dakota, and the support center serving their classic system was located 350 miles away. The risk of lost production time weighed heavily on the company.

Wheeler Manufacturing had relied on classic systems from Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) for decades, beginning with a PDP before moving to a MicroVAX, then to a VAX, and ultimately to an Alpha in 1999. The hardware ran business-critical applications that were customized for Wheeler and related to many aspects of the manufacturing process. They wanted to continue using these applications, but they needed to find a way to reduce risk and eliminate unwanted downtime.

The Solution

Tony Waller, CIO of Wheeler Manufacturing, decided to purchase a spare drive to avoid a similar problem down the road. He reached out to Pyramid Technology Services to purchase a drive. When Pyramid learned about Wheeler's situation, they determined that their client could benefit from virtualizing their AlphaServer. They could preserve their classic system, which was working well for them, as well as eliminate unwanted downtime and reduce the risk of data loss. Pyramid recommended that Wheeler consider the Charon solution from Pyramid's business partner, Stromasys.



Technology Services, Inc.

PARTNER PROFILE

Pyramid Technology Services, Inc. sells new and refurbished enterprise servers and networking equipment along with professional services to get the equipment up and running. Pyramid also offer customized maintenance programs to ensure maximum uptime, along with a full spectrum of IT solutions, including hardware support, managed services, professional IT services, Cloud services, IT asset disposition, data center moves, virtualization, and more. For more information, please visit:

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stromasys
engineered solutions

The Wheeler team was excited but skeptical at first. “When we discovered the Charon solution, it seemed too good to be true—like smoke and mirrors in a good old fashion magic show.” said Waller, who was impressed by the low cost, quality of solution, and the quick install time. It was hard to believe that this solution could be so affordable and that it could be implemented in under a week, start to finish. Waller reached out to some references, and their reviews were overwhelmingly positive. Wheeler was delighted with the recommendation provided by Pyramid. They did not consider other options; Wheeler had found what they were looking for in Charon.

The Result

Pyramid arranged for a Stromasys engineer to come to Wheeler for the installation. The engineer began the install on a Tuesday morning, and by late Thursday everything was set up. “It probably took longer to get the cord in the wall and get the blade in the rack than to get things converted,” Waller said. The Stromasys engineers completed the installation efficiently and effectively, so that the virtual environment was running the original applications just as before.

Thanks to a backup supplied by Pyramid, the Wheeler team has storage for past data. The backup holds up to two years of records, allowing the team to access archive data and eliminating an opportunity for risk. In addition to Pyramid’s partnership with Stromasys, Waller was pleased with their involvement in the installation process: “Pyramid gets high marks for looking out for our best interests.”

With Charon installed, throughput approximately doubled. Waller explains, “All our software works like it always did, only twice as fast.” Charon has proved itself to be a gateway to business continuity for Wheeler Manufacturing. As Waller adds, “Our end users have no way of knowing that they are not still running on the Alpha server except that processes take half the time they used to.” The applications function exactly as they did prior to installing Charon, but now the system is more reliable and faster.

“We had lots of concerns with the concept of complete virtualization of our Alpha environment and reliance on a Windows platform to duplicate the ‘years between reboots’ reliability of our VMS/AlphaServer,” Waller says, “but they have all been put to rest with the performance and transparency of the Charon/Windows replacement server.” Wheeler has had no problems with the Charon solution since the installation. “It still seems like smoke and mirrors,” said Waller. “Charon is great; it works like a dream.”

About Stromasys

Stromasys is the original and leading provider of enterprise-class cross-platform virtualization solutions, including PDP-11, Digital VAX and Alpha, HP 3000, and SPARC servers. The company extends the life cycle of business and mission-critical systems through virtualization, modernization, and system enhancement.

Founded in 1998 and headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, and in Boston, Massachusetts, with sales offices as well as engineering, development, and research labs located around the world, Stromasys has implemented more than 5,000 cross-platform virtualization solutions for the world’s leading companies in over 50 countries.



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Tony Waller,
CIO,
Wheeler Manufacturing