

Virtualization and PolarStar™ Highlights

Case Study

OUR CLIENT: EXTERIOR WOOD, INC.

SUPPLYING THE HIGHEST QUALITY PRESSURE-TREATED LUMBER IN THE WEST

THE ISSUE: INCREASE SYSTEM AND NETWORK AVAILABILITY AND RELIABILITY, AND ENSURE LONG-TERM CONTINUITY OF SUPPORT



EXTERIOR WOOD, INC.



Exterior Wood serves retail building supply centers throughout the western United States and Canada, and offers the widest array of pressure-treated products.

EXTERIOR WOOD

EXTERIOR WOOD, INC., BASED IN WASHOUGAL, WA, PROVIDES THE WIDEST ARRAY OF PRESSURE-TREATED PRODUCTS IN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES AND CANADA. For over 35 years, Exterior Wood has been a family-owned business, growing by focusing on quality, being environmentally conscious, and by building strong relationships, both in-house and business-to-business.

As Exterior Wood's business grew over the years, their technology requirements began to outgrow their network of "white box" computers. The business had evolved to have a much greater reliance on technology and the aging, out-of-warranty systems were insufficient for the task. In 2001, Polar Systems was contacted to help document their environment – what they had and what they needed; developing a strategic technology roadmap with options for Exterior to reach its goals. From then on, Polar Systems was called in to help as needed, bringing "their toolboxes rattling around," states Larry Miller, Exterior Wood MIS/IT Manager.

FROM BREAK-FIX TO TRUSTED-ADVISOR: It wasn't until two years later, when Polar Systems was helping resolve a server failure that Larry realized the value of having a 3rd party helping to proactively manage the IT infrastructure. "It was a difficult 'sell' to get Dave [Perry, President] & Doug [Engle, Controller] to come on board with Polar," states Miller. "Now they've come to view Polar as a strategic partner and rely upon them to make business-critical technology decisions."

Shortly after the emergency server fix, Exterior Wood signed on as a PolarStar Managed Services client, enlisting Polar Systems to help Larry manage and monitor Exterior's network of servers and workstations. The focus shifted to improving reliability, security, availability, and disaster recovery capabilities. In addition to having Polar Systems come on board to help with managing Exterior Wood's IT environment, a series of projects was initiated to replace aging systems, starting with a server virtualization project.

Polar Systems helped Exterior Wood evaluate a number of solutions. They ultimately decided to include a hybrid storage array from Tegile Systems, plus a server refresh in the virtualization project. The Tegile solution offered Exterior the most flexibility for future upgrades and IT initiatives, such as adding virtual desktops and additional servers to the environment. States Miller, "When we started transitioning our old 'white boxes' to new servers, Polar helped us save a couple hundred thousand dollars."

Exterior Wood's virtualization project consisted of installing and configuring new server hardware, the Tegile SAN (storage area network), new redundant iSCSI switches, configuring Microsoft Windows Server 2012 Standard, and setting up Hyper-V hosts in a clustered environment for high availability. Unitrends was chosen for their backup solution, backing up to the Tegile array, and providing offsite disaster recovery via Unitrends' Vault2Cloud™ cloud-based vaulting solution. Immediately, Exterior Wood realized the benefits of having a well-performing, highly available and redundant IT infrastructure – one where data is protected, backed-up and rapidly recoverable.

THE POWER OF EXPERT IT

Polar™
SYSTEMS

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ESTABLISHED TRUST: A primary reason why Exterior Wood chose Polar Systems was because of the level of trust Polar established during the years as an IT vendor while focused on one-off projects and break-fix repairs. “My trust index is that I could easily give alarm codes and keys to Polar,” states Miller. “We started with Polar helping out when we needed them, and they became a life support system.” Also a family-owned business for over 30 years, Polar Systems’ core values of excellence in customer support and service quality were key in building the strong 12+ year relationship with Exterior Wood.

As MIS/IT Manager with Exterior Wood for the last 16 years, Larry Miller is considering options for the company for when he eventually retires. He would really like a partner that could step in and take over the daily management of the environment and he is confident that Polar Systems will be a part of that transition plan. “If I ever get hit by a bus, Exterior will just call Polar and transition to them,” says Larry. “Polar has saved [us] a lot of times. Now, I learn of a problem after one of Polar’s guys have proactively fixed it. That’s really one of the nicest benefits. It makes my life very easy.”

THE VALUE OF MANAGED SERVICES: The value that Polar Systems has provided can be seen in the increased stability of Exterior Wood’s environment since the virtualization project was completed. Server downtime in the months after being virtualized has been minimal. Additionally, Exterior Wood is better able to forecast IT spend, increase end-user productivity and provide emotional peace of mind for Miller. Larry has been able to take time off and has been able to start planning his retirement, due to the fact that Exterior Wood has engaged Polar Systems for PolarStar Managed Services.



Exterior Wood product brands and sample applications

About Polar Systems

Polar Systems, Inc., founded in 1981, has built a reputation as one of the premier technology consulting providers in Oregon & SW Washington. The company’s diverse client list includes many of the best-known companies and government agencies in the area. Polar Systems is a Dell Premier Partner and a charter member of the Microsoft Certified Partner program.

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