Managed IT services comes to the rescue for a medical management company.

About Merrick

Merrick Management provides billing, accounting, accounts receivable management, and professional management services to anesthesia practices. The organization enables anesthesiologists the flexibility to work without having to maintain an office, essentially serving as their back-office professional administrators.

Since 1976, Merrick Management has provided its clients with the business tools and infrastructure needed to thrive in the fast-paced and unpredictable healthcare environment. Merrick Management can produce significant savings and improve a practice's cash flow. In addition to lightening the administrative burdens of managing a practice, a partnership with Merrick can eliminate numerous fixed and variable costs associated with anesthesia services. In order to provide this broad range of professional offerings, Merrick Management must utilize customized practice management software designed specifically for anesthesia billing, which provides the business components, infrastructure, and support necessary for anesthesia practices to succeed. The company operates in an industry that has become more complex in recent years, with increased legal constraints and an expanded regulatory compliance burden.

Clients in Kentucky and surrounding states submit a quarter million new claims per year. Because they operate in the healthcare industry, the company's clients demand both time-sensitive accounting processes and personal data security protocols.

Merrick Management was founded by Garland H. Barr III, and is led by partners Kelly Ison, MHA; Ryan S. Nunnelley, MBA; and Richard F. Schoff Jr, MBA, CPA. The company employs 50 staff. The partners pride themselves on strong and supportive relationships with their clients, citing it as a company cornerstone. Ison boasts, "We still have the first client this company was founded with."

The Challenge

Merrick Management's primary server houses medical data and provides security for personal information. When the company's server area network (SAN) permanently failed recently, it resulted in a catastrophic data loss that could have had a harsh impact on the company.

"We have millions of scanned documents on those SANs," according to Ison. Knowing that all technology is fallable, he anticipated the possibility of a SAN failure, and had set up contingency plans. He recalls thinking, "I have to have someone who knows how to get that done because, frankly, I do not."

Without access to the server's data, the potential loss per hour to Merrick Management was more than the cost of employee payroll. "When we're down, it's a huge inconvenience to our clients," said Ison. "Their money is delayed—a problem amounting to $25,000 per hour. And it makes us look bad. We have turnaround guarantees. We have close relationships with our clients."

From a business standpoint, Merrick Management risks losing clients if it experiences long or repeated downtime. "But even more important than that is our reputation," said Ison. "These clients put their trust in us. We never want to let them down."

> "When we go down, I start to stress. We can't afford downtime. We have to be consistent—be here—be open and 'up'."
> -Kelly Ison, MHA,
> Partner at Merrick Management, Inc.

The Solution

Merrick Management engaged with NetGain and Technology OneSource for managed IT services several years before the SAN failure, citing the need for a deep bench of certified engineers. "Technology is the backbone of our business, and NetGain does everything for us. Phone system, Visa card processing, new computers, help desk. NetGain Technologies is our IT officer."

During a standard business review and technical assessment, Technology OneSource engineers identified the company's data server as end-of-life. Documentation from the review cautioned that the SAN was at risk of failure. The report also specified the technical requirements needed, if a failure were to occur before proactive replacement.

> **Documentation from a periodic business review cautioned that the SAN was at risk of imminent failure. The review report specified technical requirements if a failure were to occur before proactive replacement.**

Based on NetGain Technologies' prediction of an imminent server failure, Merrick Management chose to initiate a SAN replacement project. On a Saturday morning, shortly after the decision was made to replace their SAN—but before the new solution was in place—the SAN died.

NetGain Technologies quickly assembled a team of Technology OneSource engineers with a variety of skillsets, to work both onsite and remotely, to institute the contingency plan.

Merrick Management's regular Technology OneSource engineer "kept in constant contact with is through the weekend," said Ison. "Overall, we were down 24 hours, from Saturday morning to Sunday morning. Two critical servers weren't available. By Sunday at 11am, we were up again. NetGain's team transitioned us. I came in here Monday morning and honestly couldn't tell a difference—which is exactly why you trust your network to someone like NetGain."

The Results

When Merrick Management partner Richard Schoff sent a message that the company's SAN was down, Kelly Ison didn't have to alter his weekend plans to deal with the situation. "My server goes down and I'm turkey hunting," said Ison. "I know I'm in confident hands."

Ison explained, "I emailed my NetGain technician. I didn't panic—I knew we had a secondary backup. We knew the server was old. I've gone through failures before. I was confident they were able to do what needed to be done."

Merrick Management saw NetGain Technologies as a trusted partner that understood the impact of downtime, not just a technology consultant. While the organization had researched a potential switch to a managed IT services solution several years ago, they were not trying to escape a bad situation. In fact, they were pleased with their existing IT consultant. "They were good. They took care of us," said Ison, of the previous vendor who was a smaller IT services provider. "But we outgrew them. NetGain has more people. I know they'll be able to fix whatever goes wrong. I know they're making sure that we're set for whatever comes along. I trust that it will work."

> **"I think we've implemented almost every recommendation NetGain has made. We've reached a comfort level."**
> **-Kelly Ison, MHA, Partner at Merrick Management, Inc.**

Merrick Management made a business decision—rather than a purely technical calculation—to invest in an IT environment that would further the company's business goals. When the SAN failure occurred, Ison recognized the value of the IT investment. "NetGain also helps us manage our backup. They'd already verified the backup was good—I didn't panic from that standpoint. I just knew I had to be up on Monday morning. And it was."

Contact NetGain Technologies Today to Learn How Managed IT Services can Transform Your Business!

About NetGain Technologies

Headquartered in Lexington, KY, NetGain Technologies monitors and maintains the systems and networks of businesses all across the South and Central US. NetGain's managed services allow companies to grow and expand through optimized technology solutions. Staffed by 100 engineers who hold over 300 technical certifications, NetGain supports clients across the technology spectrum and is SOC 2-certified, to assure confidentiality, privacy, and security.

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