

Company Profile: Baker Triangle is one of the largest drywall and plaster contractors in the US with more than 1,500 employees in five offices throughout Texas. The company approaches each project as a piece of art while offering economy and efficiency to an end product of the highest quality.

Website: www.bakertriangle.com

Business Challenge: Baker Drywall and Triangle Plastering merged in February 2006 to form one of the largest specialty contractors in the US. While combining the two companies made business sense, the merger created significant IT management challenges. For decades, the two distinct networks grew unchecked with little planning or consistency, making the integration extremely disjointed and complex. The success of the merger hinged on being able to create an integrated and consistent business platform for the new company.

Solution: Baker Triangle deployed a remote and automated systems management solution from Kaseya that gives the IT staff a complete and transparent view into all IT systems on the two networks from a central management console. The solution allows administrators to monitor, manage, secure and back up all servers and workstations with a single application – regardless of the physical location of the systems.



Getting a Handle on IT Helps Complete Drywall Merger

One of the largest specialty contractor merges in US history created significant IT management challenges. For decades, Baker Drywall and Triangle Plastering enjoyed extraordinary growth, building two successful businesses that worked on public, private and commercial construction projects throughout Texas and the Southwest. Success didn't come without its problems, however. The companies' IT environments were allowed to grow unchecked and unmanaged, creating complex, heterogeneous networks with very little consistency or even processes in place to deal with business continuity, disaster recovery or security. When the two companies merged in February 2006, IT was an afterthought, and there were serious availability and performance issues that needed to be dealt with if the merger would be successful.

"It is safe to say that technology was not a big part of the two separate companies' business culture nor was IT management weighing heavily on anyone's mind," said Kenneth Sewell, director of technology for Baker Triangle, the merged company created from Baker Drywall and Triangle Plastering. "I was essentially brought in to build a new unified IT infrastructure that the company's employees could use to streamline business operations. Basically, we needed to modernize."

As part of a \$500,000 upgrade, Sewell needed to merge the company's business systems, creating a consistent, intuitive platform for both the contractors and the administrative staff. He also needed to upgrade the server environment and transfer paper design plans and drawings to the digital format to take advantage of new technology. The administrative systems like payroll and human resources also needed to be upgraded. Email needed to be addressed as well since one company's email system was on Exchange and the other on a third-party platform.

The biggest problem, however, was getting a handle on what each company already had in terms of IT inventory. Since the two environments were essentially left alone for years, there was no central repository of auditing information and there was no way of telling what desktops, laptops, printers and networking equipment were deployed in each office. Not only was this inefficient and a waste of resources, the larger company would be subject to more strict regulations, putting its compliance status for the merger in jeopardy.

"Everything was essentially a mess," Sewell said. "I needed to first see what was out there, upgrade equipment and simplify management."

A better handle on IT

Baker Triangle deployed a remote and automatic systems management solution from Kaseya that gives its IT administrators complete visibility and control over all servers and workstations on the network – regardless of the physical location of the systems. Instantly, Sewell was able to monitor, manage, secure and back up the entire environment spread across five offices throughout Texas from a central Web-based management console.

Information on each system – including vendor and model number, operating system, installed applications, memory capacity, storage capacity, peripherals, even user logon information – is continuously collected and stored in a central repository and is available at the touch of a button for procurement, compliance and auditing purposes.

"It was unbelievable," Sewell said. "Within a matter of minutes, I was able to achieve complete transparency throughout both heterogeneous networks. I knew exactly what we had, what was missing, what needed to be upgraded and what needed to be retired." Previously, Sewell had tried to install a competing remote systems management solution from Track-It, but the solution was so complex and tenuous, he decided to scrap his plans and go with the Kaseya solution.

Kaseya deploys a small client on each system on the network that automatically monitors each system, alerting the IT staff of any performance or availability issues. This gives administrators the ability to head off potential problems before they lead to downtime. A customizable scripting engine also allows administrators to automate basic tasks like patch management, software deployment and defrag, ensuring that systems are always up to date and are running optimally.

If issues do arise, users can issue a ticket through the Kaseya solution, where it is routed to an administrator. The tickets are tracked through a Web-based console, giving administrators the ability to view and address the ticket from anywhere with an Internet connection, including their smart phones. Previously, employees had to deal with the issue themselves, bother a more computer-proficient co-worker or call a costly consultant to come in – usually days later. Now, tickets are resolved in minutes.

The Kaseya solution also ensures that every system is backed up and can be recovered quickly. While Baker Triangle uses Unitrends to back up locally, the Kaseya solution manages remote backups, ensuring that there is a copy of every server, desktop and laptop in the company's central data center. If a system needs to be restored, Sewell is able to conduct a bare metal restore – rebuilding the system with the operating system, applications, configuration, user settings and data – remotely within an hour.

"Small companies can get away with not having a consistent approach to IT. The network is pretty manageable. But when two mid-sized companies suddenly merge to create a large heterogeneous environment, it pays to have a good handle on things," Sewell said. "Kaseya allows us to consistently and efficiently manage our large distributed environment, ensuring systems availability, performance and security."

Using technology to improve customer service

As a result of the Kaseya solution, Baker Triangle has a complete and accurate handle on their IT systems, allowing the merged company to seamlessly integrate IT systems across all five offices. This visibility makes the IT environment healthier as a whole, improving application availability and giving contractors access to the design tools and plans they need on a daily basis. Baker Triangle is now able to use IT as a competitive advantage, using technology to streamline business operations and improve the quality of its product and customer service.

"We're a deadline driven business. We need to get bids completed on time, and then, once we get the project, we need to maintain the work schedule that we promised in the bid. Everything needs to support this process in an effort to remain competitive. Kaseya allows IT to support the business staff in an efficient way, so we can meet these deadlines," Sewell said.

Key Benefits

- Baker Drywall and Triangle Plastering successfully merged their IT networks, consolidating its contractors on a single design platform
- Support systems – file serving, email, accounting, human resources – are also integrated throughout the merged company
- Systems health has improved dramatically, giving all employees – including remote workers – seamless, immediate access to the tools and information they need
- Systems management, data protection and security are integrated through one automated solution, streamlining basic administrative tasks, simplifying IT management and freeing up the IT staff to work on more proactive projects
- Administrators are able to remotely access any system on the network, helping to reduce help desk resolution times

"Thanks to Kaseya, we're now starting to do proactive, preventative maintenance instead of running around trying to react to events around us. The result is a more efficient IT organization, more productive employees and a healthier business."

– Kenneth Sewell, director of technology, Baker Triangle

The Kaseya solution has improved customer service in other ways as well, giving the company new capabilities in the field. The company started deploying mobile trailers at each job site that are equipped with desktops with access to Baker Triangle's corporate network and design software. An administrator can set up, deploy and manage the systems remotely from headquarters in Dallas without stepping foot in the trailer, allowing a small IT staff to manage dozens of locations without having to travel between sites. Now, contractors can make last-minute design changes, test out new solutions and collaborate with employees back at the office without leaving the field. As a result, projects are being completed more quickly and with a higher level of quality.

IT management is now much simpler through Kaseya, integrating systems management, monitoring, data protection and security in one solution. The better visibility ensures that systems are up to date with the latest patches and security updates while the company is in a better position to ensure internal and external compliance. Purchasing decisions are made with up-to-date and accurate information, saving Baker Triangle on unnecessary expenditures for redundant equipment.

"Thanks to Kaseya, we're now starting to do proactive, preventative maintenance instead of running around trying to react quickly to events around us," Sewell said. "The result is a more efficient IT organization, more productive employees and a healthier business."

In the future, Sewell plans to start using Kaseya's patch management and Endpoint Security modules to further integrate IT maintenance under one platform and one management console. His staff attended several online training classes and a three-day boot camp offered by Kaseya that teach them how to better utilize Kaseya's advanced management features.

"The great thing about Kaseya is that you can be up and running within hours and have everything you need to proactively manage any size IT environment," Sewell said. "And then you can take these classes that just completely blow your mind with the kind things you can do with remote monitoring, scripting and automation. They are continually making the solution better and coming up with things that make my life much easier."