

From Crisis to Champions

When Queensland print communications company Fergies faced a major system failure, they turned to Computer Merchants for urgent help. What started as a crisis for the business ended up strengthening the company, making it more competitive.



Fergies
Est. 1868

THE SITUATION

There is never a good time to face a major system failure, but heading into a public holiday weekend made the situation all the more challenging.

“Our production server failed catastrophically,” explained Josh Wright, Fergies IT Manager.

Fergies had an external provider, but, as Wright discovered on the Queen’s Birthday weekend, backups were not working. For the business, this meant significant interruption.

“When the servers are not working, we can’t process jobs. If those jobs are not delivered on time, customers can easily go elsewhere,” said Wright.

Wright uncovered a number of servers in what he describes as various states of decay. With help not forthcoming, Wright took the step of looking beyond the previous managed services partner, and sought urgent help from Computer Merchants.

“We had backups of primary servers, but recovering that was hit and miss. All of the servers were running old operating systems, Server 2003 or older, and that made us vulnerable,” said Wright. “Of the eight different servers, some had backups not working, and the service provider was not testing them.”

THE SOLUTION

The first priority was to get Fergies’ systems operational, so that the business could continue its primary function of serving customers.

“Computer Merchants provided us with a temporary server to get us out of trouble. They made sure we had an email system and could serve our customers,” said Wright.

Once the immediate crisis was under control, Computer Merchants set about working with Wright to determine how the business could move forward. Wright worked with the traditional business to uncover opportunities that would not only maintain services, but also offer customers a more modern approach.

“First, we needed to virtualise our environment, both for simplicity and for the cost benefits,” said Wright.

The solution incorporated two Lenovo System X3650M4 production servers and a disaster recovery (DR) server, along with Lenovo’s V3700 StorWize storage option. The hardware was chosen for its ease of integration, along with benchmark-topping reliability and performance.

An important recommendation was the introduction of Veeam Backup and Replication. This enables Fergies to very quickly recover virtualised applications and data, without their business losing valuable operation time.

“We needed a cultural shift that planned obsolescence, to prevent future problems,” said Wright.



Computer Merchants are very knowledgeable, always willing to help, and I always got an honest answer to my questions.

BILL CAMPBELL
CEO, Fergies.

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Veeam gave us the flexibility for offsite backup, away from the customer environment.

JOSH WRIGHT
IT Manager, Fergies.



THE OUTCOME

Ultimately, with a renewed investment in technology, the business sought returns in improved services as well as reduced costs. The Computer Merchants solution delivered on both counts. The solid foundations have allowed Wright to streamline workflow, thanks to a far greater visibility of all aspects of the business.

“We have focused on automation and process improvement in the company, and are now looking more profitable as a result,” said Wright. “We have better visibility of what we are doing, and can identify areas for improvement.”

The business now has a web portal and is rolling out a digital store presence, meaning that customers can build jobs on the Fergies platform, 24/7.

“Our customers can now see and order stock live. They can build their jobs on our platform. This enhances our customer engagement,” said Wright.

The stable core systems that Fergies invested in reduces the risk to the business for Fergies. Virtualisation and the easier management of the Veeam and Lenovo combination mean that Fergies save the cost of their previous managed services contract.

“Day-to-day it is fairly pain-free, and things just work,” said Wright.

The flexibility provided by Veeam’s solutions makes offsite backup a breeze, says Wright, who has implemented regular tests to ensure the business can face future challenges with confidence. In the event that systems cannot be restored in minutes, the business can switch to the DR system and continue, without interruption to customers or operations, allowing for high availability.

Importantly, Fergies can now be proactive in maintaining systems and streamlining processes. Wright can manage infrastructure in less than a third of his time, meaning he can focus on further process improvements within the company. Not only does the business avoid the significant cost of downtime, with more than sixty people unable to perform their tasks, but Wright is able to develop the customer-facing systems that now make Fergies a technology leader in their industry.

“Customer feedback has been positive,” concluded Wright.

ABOUT COMPUTER MERCHANTS

All sorts of businesses, from the small local specialist to some of Australia’s best known names, depend on Computer Merchants to help them get the most from technology. Since 1979, we have been creating the right blend of innovation and proven business results to plan, design and implement solutions that are based on our customers’ unique situations and ambitions.

Great solutions are about more than just technology. They are about asking the right questions and listening to the answers. Every Computer Merchants specialist has not only exceptional technology skills but also a depth of business knowledge that allows us to gain true understanding of your organisation’s specific needs. Because of this, we are equipped to work in partnership with you to choose the options that will empower your business to reach its goals.

ABOUT FERGIES – INNOVATION IN PRINT

Fergies is a proven innovator and industry leader. Since our inception in 1868 we have continuously invested in new technologies to ensure you receive the best results in delivering your campaigns and products to market at the highest quality and in the fastest possible time. Our dedication to continuously delivering clients expectations while being at the forefront of technology is unrivalled.



We are no longer
throwing money at
getting daily help
because we don’t
need it. Things
just work.

JOSH WRIGHT
IT Manager, Fergies.

