

Dungannon Meats Beefs Up Protection of Production Systems with Marathon Technologies

PROFILE

Leading supplier of fresh meat products to several of UK's largest retail supermarkets

ENVIRONMENT

Marathon everRun FT™ Software
SplitSite® Option

WINDOWS APPLICATION

Scanvaegt Multiflex 3000
(ERP Gateway)

THE COMPANY

For any firm involved in manufacturing and processing, ensuring continual operation of production systems is absolutely critical to the business. Any downtime has immediate impact on productivity and profitability as well as serious knock-on effects in terms of customer service levels and damaged reputation. As a leading supplier of fresh meat products to several of the UK's largest retail supermarkets, Dungannon Meats has selected continuous availability software from Marathon Technologies to ensure applications will continue to run regardless of any hardware failure.

THE SITUATION

Dungannon Meats operates in one of the fastest moving, high pressure retail supply chain environments. Customer orders arrive via EDI early to mid morning on the day of production, and all orders are manufactured for same day dispatch to customer depot. Should the IT systems controlling production and order fulfillment fail for even half an hour, an entire day's orders could be lost.

In a very competitive market, Dungannon can ill afford to let its customers down. With that in mind, the company sought to implement IT systems that would be immune to the potentially devastating consequences of hardware failure. Following a review of requirements, Dungannon's IT partner, Real Time Systems, introduced the Company to Marathon Technologies' everRun FT™ software as a potential solution.

THE APPROACH

Marathon's everRun software protects Windows applications from downtime in the event of server failure. everRun creates a 'virtual server', running all applications simultaneously on two standard Intel servers. If one of the servers fails, the virtual server will ComputeThru® the failure and continue to operate on the remaining server. The users experience no interruptions to IT service. Meanwhile, the IT administrator can repair the failed server, safe in the knowledge that the business will continue to function unaffected. The system does not require complex, costly equipment and has a very low administrative overhead.

Success Story

WORLDWIDE HEADQUARTERS

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PUTTING MARATHON TO THE TEST

Brian Murphy, IT Technical Manager at Dungannon, commented, "Marathon promised 99.999% reliability of our system. We couldn't quite believe it but after rigorous testing we were convinced that this was the best solution to deliver maximum availability for our business critical applications." Using the SplitSite® option Dungannon Meats has reduced its risk of hardware failure further by locating the two windows servers on separate manufacturing sites served by independent power sources.

THE SOLUTION

Marathon's software works in conjunction with Microsoft Windows operating systems and Dungannon's server hardware to create a virtual Windows application environment. Applications running in this fault tolerant environment continue to operate seamlessly even in the event of a hardware failure. Marathon's everRun software protects all Windows applications on the system, providing high availability computing; mirrored data storage; uninterrupted network access; and continued service through faults and failures. Unlike some of the more conventional clustering alternatives this is achieved without needing to modify applications or develop custom scripts.

The solution uses three copies of standard edition Windows operating system. A copy is installed on each of the two identical servers. The third is used on the Marathon FTvirtual Server, a virtual Windows environment that operates as a guest OS across the two servers. The everRun FT software keeps two servers running in synchronized "lockstep",

performing identical operations on both at the same time. The virtual server environment created by the everRun software is identical to a standard Windows server environment and appears on the network as a single Windows host server. Applications are installed, configured, and run in the same way that they are on a standard Windows server. Because applications are operating within the everRun virtual environment, they are completely protected from hardware and many operating system failures. In the event of a failure, applications continue to operate without loss of transactions, data, or network connectivity. All in-process disk transactions are maintained throughout the failure and application data is protected by disk data mirrored on redundant drives associated with each server.

THE RESULTS

Thanks to Marathon, risk of system downtime and associated business loss has been virtually eliminated at Dungannon Meats. Brian recalled one particular incident when Marathon proved its worth, "We recently had a network card failure on the production server. Under normal circumstances this would have resulted in system downtime, but with the Marathon solution it was business as usual!" He continued, "With increased resilience in our critical systems, we can be completely confident that we will meet our customer's expectations, everyday."