



Lights-out data center leverages self-healing arrays from Xiotech

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Brokerage firm Capital Institutional Services, Inc. (CAPIS) is using Xiotech's self-healing Emprise 5000 storage system and a VMware server virtualization project as key pieces of its lights-out data center for disaster recovery.

CAPIS is running Xiotech Magnitude 3D 4000 systems in its primary data center, which it is moving to a new location in Dallas, with the Emprise 5000 in its lights-out alternate data center at another Dallas location. The lights-out data center is scheduled to go into full production in September.

"Our goal is to have a data center where we do not have to have staff," said Marcia Morrow, vice president of technology services for CAPIS. "We want to run it in lights-out fashion where we don't have anyone over there." After that, the company will build a network operations center with monitoring systems.

Morrow said that CAPIS was looking to consolidate hardware and save money in moving from a 2,500 sq. ft. data center to a 500 sq. ft. facility. Using a lights-out data center requires replicating customer data in real-time without employee intervention. "We had a lot of costs associated with two data centers with a lot of equipment in them," Morrow said. "Part of the reason for Emprise is a virtualization project. We're moving off some of our current platforms such as IBM pSeries to a VMware platform. The pSeries takes up a lot of space and used a lot of power."

Prior to the consolidation, CAPIS had 80 pSeries servers with attached storage. After the consolidation, it turned to pSeries blade servers with no attached storage, which were connected to the Magnitude SAN. But while planning the SAN implementation late last year, Morrow learned of the Emprise system that Xiotech still had under stealth.

CAPIS looked at Fibre Channel and iSCSI SANs from Compellent Technologies, LeftHand Networks, EqualLogic and Xiotech. When the company met with Xiotech to discuss purchasing a Magnitude 3D 4000, Xiotech representatives told them about the Emprise. CAPIS then evaluated the Emprise for attaching to the pSeries. "We were running out of disk space, and determined [the Emprise] could not meet the timeframes we needed, so we purchased a Magnitude 3D 4000," Morrow said.

CAPIS currently has two Magnitude 3D 4000 Fibre Channel systems connected to the IBM blades with an Emprise 5000 in the data center hosting a SQL cluster. CAPIS has 1.5 TB on the Emprise 5000 and 8.3 TB on the Magnitudes. Morrow said she expects to eventually upgrade the Emprise to a 7000, but that larger system wasn't available when CAPIS brought the Emprise in for testing in the spring before Xiotech officially launched it in April.

"We were an early adopter on Emprise, before it was the Emprise," she said. "We had an installation in our new data center that we tested with in the first quarter of the year. Once it was released, we purchased it."

Morrow said the Emprise's self-contained arrays and five-year warranty played a major role in the purchase. "We could put [the Emrpsie array] in a mission-critical implementation and never have to touch it, and Xiotech would warranty it for five years and we would never have a disk failure," she said. "We didn't quite believe that was something they could do at first. That was the driver – no maintenance."