

## PartnerONE SMB Network Success Story



### Seamless NT4 Migration Means Smooth Sailing for Hobie Cat, thanks to TNCC and HP

Speed, performance and agility. For sailing enthusiasts around the world, the name Hobie Cat is synonymous with sporty performance at its very best. Few would suspect that until recently, the IT infrastructure that supported corporate functions, along with the design, manufacture and distribution of Hobie Cat's signature sailboats, catamarans, and kayaks, was anything but speedy and agile.

Bill Baldwin, CFO, Hobie Cat, explains, "When times were tough, we downsized to a single UNIX® box, running RealWorld® Accounting Software, with 8 hardwired terminals and 8 megabytes of memory. Fortunately, things turned around and we needed extra horsepower. That's when we knew that we needed help going forward." Baldwin turned to The Network Company of California (TNCC), to help translate Hobie Cat's technology needs into an environment that would support future growth.

Fred Harrah, TNCC CEO, recalls, "Initially, after discussing their needs, we designed and installed a PC-based system with one Compaq ProLiant server running Windows® NT4.0, and 18 PCs running Microsoft® Windows® 95." Hobie Cat rapidly grew into the new configuration, adding users and applications. Eventually they added an additional NT4.0/Microsoft® Exchange server, but even then, the network showed signs of strain.

### Pre-Migration Configuration

Hobie Cat's legacy software was also contributing its share of problems. Harrah explains, "Hobie Cat was running Best Software's MAS 90's peer-to-peer version. Initially, they chose it to support their core accounting functions, but they then branched out to using it to create production orders, track user time, do production loading, scheduling, and things of that nature."

Baldwin admits, "At the time we purchased MAS 90, cost was definitely a factor. It was significantly less expensive than the client/server version. We knew that it was designed to handle up to 15 users."



What happened when Hobie Cat increased the load to 20–25 users? Baldwin remembers vividly, “I had machines crashing everywhere. Whether it was a combination of the hardware and the software, or the software alone, the system just couldn’t handle it. Typically, I spent a third of my workday bringing up machines. It was really onerous for me to keep things up and running. It was clear that we needed to make changes, and I counted on TNCC to tell me what the problem was, and how I could solve it quickly and cost-effectively.”

TNCC performed a business technology assessment to take a hard look at what Hobie Cat was doing, where they wanted to go, and what would be the best fit for their environment and business needs. The analysis uncovered a network of 25 PCs of mixed vintages, including Microsoft Windows 95 and Windows 98, Windows ME and Windows XP, all connected to a Windows NT® ProLiant 800 and 1600 Server.

### **Streamline for Performance**

Harrah recalls the recommendations he brought to Baldwin. “We looked at the cost of maintaining the aging ProLiant 800 and 1600 environment, and what it would cost to get replacement hardware, should something fail. Also, we determined that the cost of extending the warranties would be the same as buying a new server and when all was said and done, we would still have the same infrastructure without any significant improvements or future scalability.”

TNCC felt that replacing the obsolete hardware would be the most cost effective solution for Hobie Cat, and would provide better performance, expandability, and reduced overall IT administrative costs. Their legacy software also required an upgrade.

Harrah explains, “The MAS 90 was locking up, and that meant everybody had to be kicked out of the system. The database would become corrupted and you’d have to resynchronize the databases and related indices and then unlock everyone’s user account. It was a mess. People couldn’t be responsive to customer needs, or get their individual work done at times. And so, in order to reduce downtime and bring Hobie Cat’s production operations online and support manufacturing and distribution functions, they needed to upgrade to MAS 200.”

That presented a challenge in itself. Hobie Cat had 18 aging PII 200Mhz Windows 95 PCs that would need to be upgraded or replaced to support the new more demanding MAS 200 manufacturing environment. Baldwin remembers Harrah’s solution.

“Fred suggested that we put in a terminal server so the Windows 95 machines could connect through Windows 2000 server terminal services. At the same time, he recommended we upgrade to Windows 2000 on the Exchange server and the application server.”

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— — Fred Harrah, CEO, TNCC

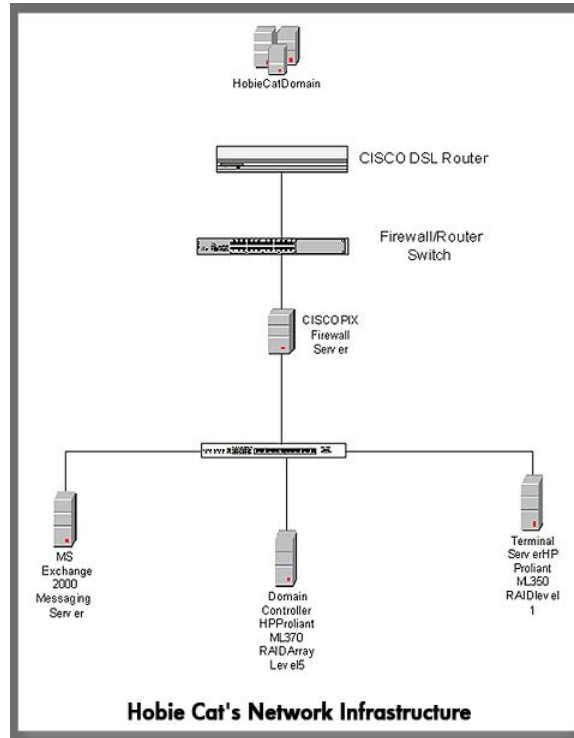
Harrah concurs, “With the terminal server option, we could do everything centrally, not spend \$18,000 on new PCs, and it would centralize all client management, upgrades, and administrative functions from the terminal server, reducing the company’s IT administrative costs significantly over the long term. The terminal server was half the cost.”

The decision to add a terminal server and upgrade to MAS 200 crystallized after Baldwin told Harrah that Hobie Cat had acquired a division in Australia. He wanted to bring them online later in the year, and ensure that data was centralized in Hobie Cat’s corporate headquarters, in Oceanside, CA.

### **PartnerONE SMB Network NT4 Migration Program**

TNCC is no stranger to Microsoft Windows NT4 migrations. In fact, TNCC was one of the first Microsoft Certified Partners in Metro San Diego to support NT technology in the early ‘90’s. It was also one of the first Partners to join the HP PartnerReach Program for Microsoft Solutions and the HP PartnerONE SMB Network NT4 Migration Program in October 2003. “I was very happy to hear about and join the HP SMB Network NT4 Migration Program,” recalls Harrah. “It definitely represents a solutions approach to a need that is widespread in the SMB marketplace.”

“It’s also a great opportunity for us to partner more closely with HP around NT4 migration,” he added. “We basically leveraged the PartnerONE SMB Network as an onramp to building out our NT4 migration services.”



## NT4 Migration Process

And how did the actual migration unfold for Hobie Cat and TNCC? Harrah recalls, “Once we got the buyoff for the migration, we created a test environment to let them check out the new applications and make sure everything was up to speed. They let their power users test the system for about 2—3 weeks prior to the actual migration.”

Baldwin recalls, “TNCC built the equipment at their facility, and brought it in to our shop. I threw everybody off the network on a Friday afternoon. TNCC came in and migrated us from NT4.0 on the existing boxes, brought in the new box with Windows 2000, and upgraded the other boxes to Windows 2000.

“We split out a separate server to handle Microsoft Exchange traffic, and upgraded from MAS 90 peer-to-peer version to MAS 200 client/server. TNCC handled all the installation and configuration. By Friday evening, we were up and running for the most part, and they were connected to us remotely. The disruption to our business was absolutely minimal.” In fact, the actual migration process took only 8 ½ man-hours.

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— — Bill Baldwin, CFO, Hobie Cat**

Shortly after the hardware and software updates, storage became a concern for Baldwin. “I absolutely filled up the existing drive capacities on my applications server. I called TNCC and they went through the options. We added another array of three 72 GB drives to increase our storage space. TNCC came in on a Friday, plugged in the three new drives, formatted and partitioned them, and we were off to the races. Once again, the disruption to our business was minimal.”

### **NT4 Migration Benefits**

Baldwin noticed significant performance improvements almost immediately. “Once we made the changes to the system, life has been sweet! A crashed machine is a very rare thing now. All of a sudden, I have 1/3 of my day back! In fact, everybody can get back to work. It’s great! Customer satisfaction has improved, and we’re getting better performance out of the whole nine yards.”

Harrah adds, “They were really impressed by the terminal server environment. They like it for a number of reasons. If one machine fails, you can go over to another and get back to what you were doing. That gives them more flexibility and more speed at a lower seat cost. Plus, the upgrade to MAS 200 has virtually eliminated the locking up of the system. Terminal Services has also provided a single place to perform software updates, instead of having to go around to each system individually. Corporate users can also access their desktop environments remotely when they are at home, or on the road traveling. TNCC can provide more immediate remote support through terminal services, instead of having to go in site to administer their network. Overall, this has helped Hobie Cat save time, be more responsive to their customers and employees, and reduce costs.”

### **Roadmap to Windows 2003**

TNCC’s service did not end with the NT4 Migration. TNCC and Hobie Cat have agreed on a roadmap to Windows 2003 to bring their Australia operations online once the busy summer season is over. Harrah explains, “The seasonality of the boat business in Australia and California are basically opposite. In August, business in the US starts to slow down, while in Australia, it’s just beginning to ramp up. It was important for us to provide a roadmap to Windows 2003, along with the NT4 Migration, to meet Hobie Cat’s seasonal needs.

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## Hobie Cat Company Reaps Big Benefits from HP PartnerONE SMB Network NT4 Migration Program

- Faster performance
- Improved productivity
- Dramatically increased uptime
- Improved connectivity
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Increased storage
- Scalability
- Stability
- Reduced IT operating costs

### Critical Success Factors

What made the NT4 Migration process so successful for Hobie Cat? Baldwin is clear, “It was based on trust, performance and leading-edge technology. I rely on TNCC for almost all of my IT needs. I trust their judgment implicitly to come along and say ‘this is what I think you have to do to make your network work.’ They give me a range of solutions to a problem and work with me to determine which is best.”

Harrah agrees that the established relationship and local presence are critical success factors. “We tend to build relationships with people, rather than getting into big battles over price,” he explains. “Being able to be someone they trust is very important. I tend to be a business person more than a salesperson, so I try to relate to things they understand—what’s going to be more cost effective, more efficient, or provide better customer service.”

And what does the PartnerONE SMB Network mean to TNCC? Harrah is clear, “I’m very excited about the HP PartnerONE SMB Network. A lot of times companies will launch initiatives and pretty much give them lip service. But I think HP is moving in the right direction with a really concerted effort to make it a successful program.”

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He continues, "It's a more focused, in-depth approach to a specific market. For most of the small and medium sized businesses that we deal with, cost is the number one factor. They really do watch their pennies. The benefits that are available through the SMB Network really make a difference."

## Technology Counts

Baldwin does not discount the importance of high-quality, reliable technology products. "We have the same confidence in our HP equipment that we have with TNCC. Our Compaq servers are out of sight, out of mind. They just hum right there outside of my office. We put in 18 Compaq PCs about four years ago, and every single one is still running. -Sixteen of the 18 are actively in use."

## TNCC Transforms Technology into Solid Business Solutions

How does Hobie Cat sum up its relationship with HP PartnerONE SMB Network Partner TNCC? Baldwin says, "They bring the technical knowledge that I don't have to the table. Our network is now beyond my level of expertise. I need somebody who is very knowledgeable and whose job it is to stay educated on what is a very rapidly changing world of technology. I'm very happy that I have a partner in TNCC. I can always rely on them to come in and be up-to-speed on what's available in the market, and to watch out for my best interests. That's the key."

### The Network Company of California (TNCC)

Based in San Marcos, CA, The Network Company of California specializes in small and medium sized business technology requirements that focus on a company network infrastructure, communications and security requirements. TNCC provides a complete line of consulting, engineering and technical services for the SMB client.

### Hobie Cat Company

Since 1950, Hobie Cat Company has been manufacturing, distributing and marketing unique and technically advanced watercraft worldwide. These include an ever-expanding line of recreational and racing sailboats, pedal-driven and paddle sit-on-top kayaks, fishing boats, and authorized parts and accessories.

For more information:

**The Network Company of California**

[www.tncc.com](http://www.tncc.com)

**Hobie Cat Company**

[www.hobiecat.com](http://www.hobiecat.com)

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