Disk Space Management Case Study

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Berry Plastics Corporation began modestly enough 30 years ago in Evansville, Indiana as an injection-molded plastic packaging and container manufacturer. But what it lacked in market share at the start, it made up for in ambition.

Today, Berry is a global leader in plastic packaging, film products, and specialty adhesives, containers, drink cups, bottles, tubes, and tapes among a wide range of other products. Privately held, the company's annual sales are $3.1 billion.

Berry Plastics Corporation

*Company paces marathon growth
with a lean IT shop
aided by S4i Systems' DASD-Plus*

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Keeping up with Berry Plastics Corporation's rapid and ongoing growth via mergers and acquisitions, and integrating acquired companies' infrastructures has been a form of extreme IT. Berry Plastics Corporation AS/400 Administrative Supervisor, Robert Jenkins, explains how his department handles the recurring work of incorporating manufacturing and front-end business system data into the corporate platform.

The IBM Power System Network

Robert Jenkins has worked six years at Berry Plastics Corporation – beginning his career as an intern in what he thought would be a temporary job to support an expensive tire habit. "My fiancé and I both raced cars, and we were burning through tires every month," he explains.

In keeping with the Berry-style trajectory, he quickly became the AS/400 Administrator Supervisor over the Administration Team (which has since expanded to four employees). "Since then we've been through five major upgrades as we've doubled in size through acquisitions," he notes.

System Architecture

"When I started here, the main JDE data library was at 600 GB. Today that main library is over 2.1 TB. Robert designed and supervises the systems at two separate data centers. The larger Power 570 at Evansville has a footprint of 4 racks and is used for high-availability testing and development. The smaller 570 in Chicago has a footprint of three racks, running production, web presence, and HR.

Growing Pains

"With the rapid growth," he explains, "the LPARs were becoming increasingly hard to manage from a storage aspect. With our small admin team, the manual cleanup of the data queues and spool files, etc., became increasingly difficult." Robert and his admin team looked at alternatives, but, he says, "The in-house solutions we considered required too much programmer involvement. It would involve writing time-consuming custom code for multiple solutions, all requiring ongoing maintenance."

About a year ago one of the IT team admins, Shaun, brought S4i System's DASD Plus to Robert's attention. "We realized we could deploy it on any of our LPAR running i OS. The immediate benefit was that we wouldn't have to develop in-house cleanup solutions. We tested the product on only one LPAR and were able to recover the storage equivalent to two 141 GB drives. We got our ROI and then some just on the test -- we deployed DASD Plus system-wide. Now we use it to project storage requirements as well as to monitor library growth, proactively keeping storage use and costs in check."

Maintaining a Lean, Dynamic, Growth-on-the-Fly Platform

Over the last six years, Robert Jenkins and his team have evolved a unique set of IT management best practices. They enable quick and efficient IT integration with the range of disparate acquisition company networks as Berry Plastics Corporation continues on its growth path. He explains it this way:

"My philosophy is that you manage your Power Systems as a platform that runs multiple OSs –a consolidation of AIX, i System, and Linux. Rather than assigning separate teams and systems for each OS – a standard practice that often encourages in-house competition for funds and projects. Our admins are deployed to different OS allocated LPARs. With this concept of managing a platform, you can bring multiple internal groups together in any number of combinations and reduce the number of Power Systems and cost. It is rarely done in a Power environment."

"Our ultimate goal is to provide a highly-flexible platform for Berry Plastics Corporation that is able to grow on the fly. We run lean, flexible, and on-demand, delivering IT resources for our users whenever they need it," Robert concludes. "We spend a lot of time balancing resources and allocating power dynamically. If we were to go down, manufacturing stops within an hour at the majority of our facilities. So we don't go down. DASD-Plus, which helps enable our ability to be flexible with storage resources, is part of our standard image on all our systems running iSeries. DASD-Plus is one of the tools we use that allows us to accomplish this by keeping storage lean and cost-effective."