

Manufacturing Automation Provider Gains Productivity and Time to Focus on Core Business



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Mark Howe, VP Sales and Marketing, The Knotts Company

Background

The Knotts Company (Knotts) represents manufacturers of industrial automation and robotics products to empower manufacturing customers with automation solutions. The company collaborates with customer experts to identify and define issues, problems and opportunities to create higher level solutions for increasing performance, productivity and profitability.

Armed with in-depth customer knowledge, Knotts skillfully applies its core competencies of pneumatics, machine guarding and framing, electric actuators, conveyors, automation, motion control, robotics, machine safety and compressors.

IT Problems and Update

Simultaneously experiencing internal IT issues and a need to update servers, Knotts leadership sought expert assistance. "It was like a perfect storm," stated Mark Howe, VP Sales and Marketing. "To get the process started, we solicited proposals from a handful of IT service companies, including eMazzanti Technologies."

Because it sells to manufacturers, Knotts had previously connected with eMazzanti through interaction at various New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP) events. eMazzanti's comprehensive presentation convinced leadership to move in that direction.

"Carl and Jessica did a great job of showing us what they were going to do and what to expect," related Howe. "We appreciated their effort to answer all our questions and the detailed, written game plan with next steps."



Solution

Goal and Audit

The project kicked off near the end of last year with the goal of building a secure network, reliable systems, and multiple layers of security for users. To gain awareness of the existing environment, eMazzanti engineers performed a complete audit.

Based on that deep analysis, they identified four improvements that needed to be in place to achieve the objectives:

- Update the server hardware
- Deploy a reliable backup solution with virtualization capability
- Deploy a firewall to secure inbound and outbound traffic with Geo blocking, HTTPS Proxy, and web blocker.
- Implement the Secure DNS and MXInspect solutions to enhance web and email security

Before making any changes, eMazzanti deployed new backup and disaster recovery hardware and initiated backups for all servers in the environment.

Server and Workstation Update

eMazzanti engineers updated Knotts' servers by deploying a new Hyper-V Host and moving two existing virtual machines running on older hardware onto the new host. Then, they converted three mission-critical servers running on old hardware and installed them on the new Hyper-V host.

Removing the workstations of all the billing, sales, and support department employees, they transitioned them to thin clients with terminal services technology vs. individual desktops. "There's a lot less going on in our server room now," said Howe. "They did an outstanding job of updating our internal IT infrastructure."

Finally, they secured the environment with a firewall and implemented security features such as HTTPS Proxies, Geo Blocking, and Web Blocker. The new email security platform filters all inbound emails. Furthermore, to make sure the servers stay up to date, they set up a weekly patching and reboot schedule.

Work from Home Setup

With the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, Knotts recently asked eMazzanti to set up several employees to work remotely from home. Prior to the virus, Knotts' employees primarily worked at the office.

"The only people that were not in the office daily are the sales team," reported Howe. "Based on the current climate and everything going on with the virus we've had to give several people remote access."

Aroja Hettigamage and Chaminda Marabage, eMazzanti engineers, had worked closely with the Knotts staff to complete the project on time and with minimal disruption. Then, they returned in March to set up remote workers.

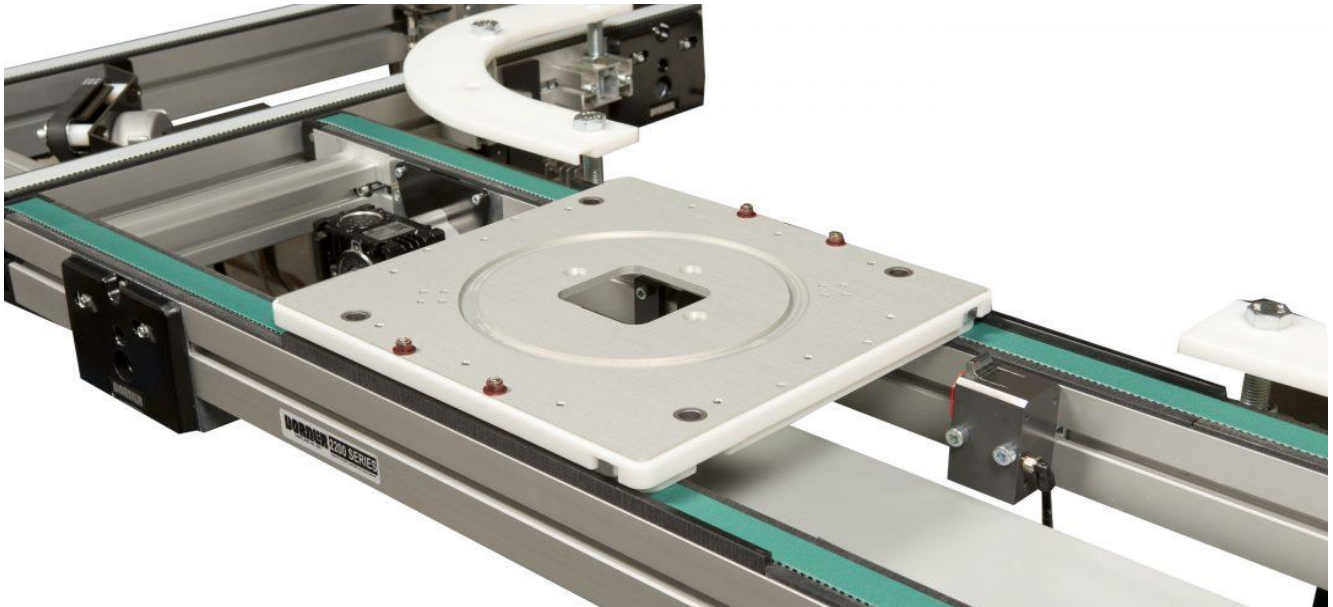
"Aroja and Chami have been very helpful connecting people so they can start working from home until this all clears up," reported Howe. "They made sure their VPN was set up properly and now, everybody's up and running. There were some challenges that weren't their fault, but they worked diligently to make sure they got resolved."

Benefits

Increased Productivity

With the upgrades complete, Knotts enjoys faster response times and increased productivity. "One of the key benefits we've experienced is the server is much quicker than our previous server," confirmed Howe. "eMazzanti made sure everybody's systems were running as expected."

Knotts leadership appreciates the skill and flexibility of the eMazzanti engineers. "The quality of work they performed is definitely good," stated Howe. "They worked towards meeting our needs and adapted to what we asked as things came up."



More Focus on Core Business

Since the upgrade, IT issues have decreased, and management enjoys more time to perform their primary responsibilities. “We’re not getting pulled from what we should be doing with our jobs—from our role of selling, for example,” related Howe. “So, we’re more focused on helping customers.”

With management not distracted by IT issues, the business benefits. “It affects the bottom line,” explained Howe. “Our world revolves around servicing our customers, so we’ve got to make sure we’re dedicating the time and the effort to as many customers as possible in our area.”

“I personally enjoy interacting with customers, working with the sales team, listening to their problems and offering solutions,” continued Howe. “When I don’t have time to do the things that I’m passionate about because I’m handling things internally that are not my role—having that managed remotely by an outside company makes all the difference.”

Long-term Technology Partner

When asked what he would say to others who might be considering engaging eMazzanti for IT services, Howe responded,

“Definitely listen to them. Technology is evolving quickly and we’re in a very high-tech industry ourselves. You want to partner with people that understand that technology. From an IT perspective, they’ve been very helpful, answering our questions and providing insight to what’s the best option going forward.”

Overall, Howe expressed satisfaction with the eMazzanti upgrade and the start of a mutually beneficial long-term relationship. “I’m looking forward to continuing in the relationship moving forward,” he concluded. “Carl has connected us with other people in the industry as well. So, it’s a good opportunity, and we appreciate what they’ve done for us.”