Hanson Professional Services, Inc.

Virtualizing AEC Skillsets Across Office Locations

Several years ago, Hanson Professional Services Inc. restructured and went from having entire project teams in a single office to spanning project teams across numerous offices. This company restructuring caused a data-set restructuring. Project data formerly stored in one office had to be available across multiple offices for sharing and collaboration.

Trying to keep these data sets sync'd between offices was virtually impossible. Hanson tried to solve this issue using a document management solution with built-in collaboration functionality. Although it worked well with many of the applications they used and solved some of the data sync issues, it did not solve them all.

Hanson needed a solution that enabled employees distributed across offices to collaborate on BIM and CAD models as though they were in the same office. After trying a number of other products, Hanson chose Panzura's Freedom Collaboration, which enabled BIM applications to work across distributed sites without any file duplication or copying. By doing this, Panzura also provided "skill set virtualization" by enabling Hanson to tap into skill set resources anywhere in the country, optimizing expertise from wherever it existed rather than relying on the resources of a single location or relocating employees to a different office.

Distributed Global Workforce, Mission Critical Data Collaboration

Several years ago, Hanson changed the arrangement of its personnel distribution. Until that time, each of its offices throughout the U.S. had been its own project center, with each discipline represented in each office. With the change, Hanson's skilled

Situation Snapshot:

25 offices nationwide, project team members distributed across the country leveraging Autodesk Revit, AutoCAD and AutoCAD Civil3D as well as Bentley GEOPAK and MicroStation

- **Challenge 1: Seamless cross-site collaboration** — team members in one location would see one set of files, while team members in a second location would see another. If employees collaborating on a project wanted to work on files from another office, they either had to copy them over or had to map a drive to the other office — a slow process that sometimes resulted in data corruption.

- **Challenge 2: Skill set virtualization** — Hanson wanted to avail itself of the skills of professionals across the country and hire the best people regardless of their geography. It needed a file collaboration tool that made skill sets portable and allowed for seamless collaboration.

- **Challenge 3: Economies of scale** — to ensure effective collaboration on a large, multiyear project, Hanson spent hundreds of hours keeping files sync'd between offices to ensure all changes were properly coordinated.

professionals were spread out around the country, so a single project team could be represented out of multiple offices. This also meant that each office maintained different data sets on a single project. The company used engineering collaboration software to handle the data sharing issues, but it was not practical to store all data using that solution. This still left data in multiple locations and did not address any of the other issues that were created by the restructuring.

Hanson also suffered from what IT Manager Bob Stidham calls "islands of data." Employees in the different offices working on the same project found themselves with project files containing dissimilar information. The company was forced to dedicate two full-time employees to handle and sync files, manually performing this task by either copying the files over to another office's server or mapping drives between the two. This was not only slow, but also too often resulted in somebody's work being lost. On one project alone, Hanson spent hundreds of hours keeping files sync'd between offices to ensure all changes were properly coordinated.

"We were jumping through hoops trying to keep these islands of data backed up in a reliable fashion, making sure the data in each file was consistent and maximizing collaboration between our offices," Stidham said.

No Solution Could Tackle the Entire Problem — from File Collaboration to Storage

Stidham realized Hanson needed a solution for its collaboration issues. He said there were many applications on the market that could provide answers to one or another of the company's issues, but none tackled the entire matter. Stidham determined that the elements of the solution Hanson was looking for included:

- **File collaboration** - The solution needed to optimize Hanson's "skill set virtualization" by enabling real-time collaboration between team members located in different offices around the country.
- **Storage centralization** - With a different set of files in each office, the solution had to centralize and reconcile the information to ensure project team members were all working from the same data rather than individual islands of data.
- **Scalability and expandability** - Hanson was on the verge of needing to add more capacity to its backup license at a cost of roughly $10,000. The company already was paying $33,000 per year in maintenance costs for backup software, and that would go up if the additional storage was added.
- **Efficient backup and easy data recovery** - After years of having IT personnel in each office back up data manually once per day and having to spend between $1,600 and $1,800 in backup tapes per month, the company needed a solution that backed up automatically and often throughout the day. It needed a solution that ensured the stored data was current, that the backup actually got done and that provided the ability to retrieve recent versions of files from the backup for comparative purposes or in the event of a file loss.

> **With Panzura, Hanson saw immediate results:**
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> - Significantly improved collaboration between skilled professionals in disparate locations
> - Offices are no longer "islands of data" — team members in each office running Panzura see one set of data stored in one central cloud storage system
> - File changes now available to team members in different offices in real time
> - Files backed up automatically in real time throughout the day as opposed to once per day
> - Reduced maintenance requirements have resulted in a 50 percent reduction in personnel needed to manage the backup process and elimination of the need to replace file servers just to increase storage space at a cost of $20,000 per facility.

Enter Panzura: The Everything Solution.

Stidham's search for a solution led him to participate in a webinar hosted by Panzura. Though skeptical at first of what he heard in the webinar, Stidham researched Panzura and found that the Panzura Distributed Cloud File System provided an enterprise-class data storage infrastructure including consolidation, archiving, heightened access, security and a highly improved global user experience. The system also provided the centralized storage needed to optimize collaboration between team members located throughout the country. By incorporating the cloud into the solution, Panzura's Distributed Cloud File System provided a common view of all files across all locations, at all times, accessible from anywhere.

Panzura gave Hanson the ability to collaborate on Revit across offices, which was very different than collaborating on simple documents, while also enabling Hanson's engineers to get real work done by providing massive business benefits.

In addition to the improved collaborative capabilities, Panzura's cloud solution provided a number of other benefits. Having its stored backup in the cloud meant Hanson would only need to add capacity as needed rather than having to purchase it ahead of the company's need. It also provided an automatic backup and recovery solution that not only was compatible with its highly technical and data-intensive AEC applications but also ensured reliable data recovery and version controls that prevent hours of specialized and technical modifications from being overwritten.

> *"Before Panzura, collaboration was problematic; it wasn't uncommon to hear team members say, 'I see one set of files in Springfield, while my colleague in Peoria sees another. Since Panzura, more often than not we hear them say, 'I just made changes; go look."*
>
> **— Robert Stidham, IT Manager, Hanson Professional Services, Inc.**

These ancillary benefits to collaboration have yielded impressive results as well:

- Time to restore files reduced 90 percent
- Eliminated need to rebuild file servers at a cost of $40,000 per site
- Files backed up automatically in real time throughout the day as opposed to once per day
- Eliminated need for tape backup that saved $33,000 per year plus $2,000 per month in tape media
- 50 percent reduction in personnel needed to manage the backup and file sharing process
- Savings of 56 percent in media needed for backup from $1,800 per month for backup tapes to $800 per month for cloud storage

About Hanson Professional Services, Inc.

COMPANY: Hanson Professional Services Inc.
HEADQUARTERS: Springfield, Ill.
OFFICES NATIONWIDE: 25
EMPLOYEES WORLDWIDE: Approximately 400
BACKGROUND: Founded in 1954, Hanson Professional Services Inc. is an award-winning company that has appeared as a Top 500 design firm in Engineering News-Record's listing of premier U.S. design firms. Its professional staff of engineers and architects, located among its 25 offices across the U.S., have been a part of many significant projects around the globe, including the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum and Lincoln Home restoration in Springfield, Ill., and the Rincon and Sabaneta dams in the Dominican Republic.

> *"With Panzura's data storage in the cloud, I don't have to manage it, or pay for it, except for what I'm using. The stuff that really 'wows' me though is not having to think about backups, no longer having islands of storage anymore and the easy cross-site collaboration because now I have one cloud for storage and collaboration...I've even had to tell the guys who used to handle backups that they had better find something else to keep them busy."*
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> — Robert Stidham, IT Manager, Hanson Professional Services, Inc.

About Panzura

Panzura is the catalyst in the transformation of cloud storage into high-performance enterprise file systems. Panzura's revolutionary distributed file locking system seamlessly combines the flexibility, performance and productivity benefits of distributed storage with the manageability, security and economics of centralized storage.

With Panzura, the cloud – public or private – not only serves as every tier of storage, it becomes the fabric that enables globally distributed teams rapid file access and easy collaboration. Panzura delivers one file system across hundreds of offices that allows users to work together as if they were in the same room. For more information, visit www.panzura.com.

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