

ERICKSON RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES

Residential innovator gains room to grow with EMC Consulting Data Center Consolidation Services



BUSINESS OVERVIEW

Tens of thousands of people are redefining retirement at Erickson Retirement Communities nationwide. For more than 25 years, Erickson has succeeded by challenging conventional thinking about aging and the impact of residential development on local economies and environments. Today, it operates more than 20 campus-style retirement communities in 13 states. Besides enjoying an active lifestyle in a beautiful setting, residents gain access to the Erickson health plan and network, which integrates physicians, technology, and research to deliver person-centered care, focused on prevention and health improvement. Recently, Erickson began extending its healthcare services to retirees “beyond the gates” of its campuses.

CHALLENGES

Erickson’s IT organization plays an important enabling and strategic role. In addition to being responsible for the enterprise systems that support day-to-day operations, it runs Erickson Health systems and maintains residents’ electronic medical records (EMR). In support of beyond-the-gates initiatives, it is developing new solutions, such as regional health information exchanges (RHIE) that enable healthcare providers to work together more effectively and efficiently to reduce costs and improve care.

Erickson’s growth and business demands for new functionality were quickly outpacing data center capacity, floor space, power, and cooling. “We had grown to more than 100 production applications,” says Jeff Bathurst, chief technology officer. “There was no way for us to expand any further.” The company decided to build a new data center; consolidate its primary and secondary data centers in the new facility; and re-purpose its third data center for backup and recovery. Once construction was complete, it looked for help in moving its data center operations to the new facility.

“We have a highly motivated, talented, willing-to-do-anything-it-takes set of technicians, engineers, analysts, and architects,” says Bathurst. “However, we knew we were going to need guidance in the data center relocation process.” Bathurst says he was frankly surprised by the responses Erickson received to its RFP for data center relocation services. “Of the five proposals we received, only EMC® Consulting, part of EMC Global Services, offered a methodology for moving our systems logically as well as physically, and that was what we needed.”

EMC SOLUTION

EMC's proposed data relocation services spanned Migration Discovery and Analysis, Planning, and Implementation—all coordinated by the onsite EMC Program Management Office.

"EMC Consulting clearly had the best-defined processes and methodologies," says Hans Keller, senior director of IT Operations, who also found validity in the fact that "EMC consultants use their own tools as part of their methodologies." For migration discovery and analysis, for example, EMC consultants used the EMC Ionix™ Application Discovery Manager (ADM) tool to automatically discover and map application relationships to build a complete physical and logical inventory.

"The methodology that EMC Consulting brought was far different than what we had originally planned," says Keller. Erickson's approach had been to break the move down into hardware components, associated software, and interfaces. However, EMC Consulting took an application-centric approach that focused on business services and determined exactly what was required to deliver each service. "By approaching it that way, EMC ensured that we broke our data center down into logical components that could be moved together," adds Keller.

"The discovery phase was an important step," agrees Bathurst. "Once you see the level of information collected by the ADM tool, you feel confident that if something is on the wire, this tool is going to get it. As a result, we knew where everything was and how it was connected. We knew what databases supported what applications, and we were able to determine the best way to move applications."

DETAILED PLANNING FOR A "NON-EVENT"

Based on the information collected and Erickson's business requirements, EMC consultants developed a detailed migration plan, infrastructure design, and timeline to support an efficient migration. The EMC team also tested the performance and readiness of the new network and systems.

"Our biggest goal was to minimize risk," says Bathurst, who was most concerned about interrupting access to medical records. "Resident care doesn't stop; it goes on at 3:00 in the morning. We had to do EMR relocation as a separate move within a very small window. We made sure that we had the data available in written form for physicians while we moved the systems, then we got them back up and validated as quickly as possible."

"The relocation of our data center went flawlessly," says Keller. "We experienced no unplanned downtime. We had one small equipment failure, but we had the spare parts on-hand to get everything up and running before the business expected everything to be back online."

"We wanted to be able to make data center relocation a non-event for our user community, we were able to accomplish that through our partnership with EMC."

NEW TOOL AND PROCESS MATURITY

Erickson IT gained other benefits besides a successful migration. "Having the EMC Program Management Office onsite helped us gain a level of process maturity that is now rippling over into our change management, configuration management, and service-level agreements," says Keller.

The company continues to use EMC tools to monitor its new data center environment, as well as support asset and configuration management. It has also adopted the EMC Consulting practice of developing run books for relocation. "The run book takes you through the process on a second-by-second, minute-by-minute basis—shutting down the services, shutting down

the hardware,” explains Keller. “We have taken that process and are using run books for all of our future consolidation efforts.”

“Currently, we’re in the midst of relocating another data center,” says Bathurst. “We’re using all the tools and methods provided to us during our engagement with EMC Consulting to do it as flawlessly as we did when we had EMC here onsite.”

SUMMARY

Consolidating data centers in the new facility is saving Erickson more than a quarter of a million dollars a year. Erickson IT also has the agility within its data center and processes to quickly adapt to any new business ventures and future needs.

“Erickson provides seniors a better quality of life,” concludes Bathurst. “For us, that’s an important mission to get behind.”

“Currently, we’re in the midst of relocating another data center. We’re using all the tools and methods provided to us during our engagement with EMC Consulting to do it as flawlessly as we did when we had EMC here onsite.”

JEFF BATHURST
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER
ERICKSON RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES

CONTACT US

To learn more about how EMC products, services, and solutions can help solve your business and IT challenges, contact your local representative or authorized reseller—or visit us at www.EMC.com.

EMC², EMC, Ionix, and the EMC logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of EMC Corporation in the United States and other countries. All other trademarks used herein are the property of their respective owners.

© Copyright 2009, 2011 EMC Corporation. All rights reserved. Published in the USA. 09/11 Customer Profile H6375.1