



Markon Puts Security First with Review Alongside ZAG

As a longtime ZAG client, Markon Cooperative previously migrated its vital systems to the cloud with Microsoft 365. But that wasn't where the relationship between Markon and ZAG ended. Instead, the partnership continues to provide greater efficiencies, risk management, and – most recently – increased security across its network infrastructure.

Cybersecurity concerns have risen over the last few years – and more recently, the FBI issued a warning that the agriculture industry will see an increase in attacks on agricultural cooperatives during critical seasons, such as planting or harvesting. With such an emphasis on security, Markon took the recommendation from ZAG to engage in a security review to identify potential areas of the company's network that may be vulnerable to attack. But first, the two companies worked together to dive deeper into Markon's technology strategy and managed services needs.

For Markon, who enables their member companies to deliver the highest quality produce to their North

American customers, finding the right managed IT services partner was important to yield operational continuity and seamless customer service.

Markon identified technology update needs

"We were facing a major upgrade for new equipment to replace Markon's legacy infrastructure. ZAG helped us transition to a superior, cloud-based solution that promotes business continuity and supports disaster recovery, as well as secure access for Markon staff working onsite or remotely," says John Eldredge, IT Director at Markon.



AT A GLANCE



Customer: Markon Cooperative

Website: www.markon.com

Customer Size: Privately Held

Region: Salinas, California

Industry: Agriculture/Fresh Produce

Solution: Managed Services



Not only did ZAG provide an effective IT solution, it offered Markon a long-term disaster recovery strategy to protect vital business data. Value-added services like anti-virus protection and automatic upgrades are included in ZAG's managed services offering. Markon also has access to ZAG's broad expertise and 24x7 network support, which saves the company the expense of additional full-time IT employees.

Security review highlights third-party risk

With the help of ZAG, Markon didn't just manage the transition to an improved network infrastructure, they adopted a new culture of security across all aspects of their business, including their work with other technology vendors.

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The partnership with ZAG has provided greater risk management and increased security across Markon's network. For example, after a security review, ZAG recommended some steps that Markon could take to strengthen its security in all digital areas of the business. Eldredge notes, “Being able to identify vulnerabilities outside of Markon's network and address the remediation steps that ZAG brought was a huge value add.”

Identifying this risk was the first step for Markon. Once identified, ZAG provided a list of remediation steps that Markon could take to strengthen its security posture.

Eldredge likened the security review and action plan to what a pilot goes through when he's about to fly. “I once heard a pilot say that unless he inspects all of the aircraft's critical components himself, he must assume that anything 'unchecked' has failed. As IT leaders, we need to adopt a similar philosophy regarding technology.”

Risk management should include vendors

Many agriculture and fresh produce companies like Markon rely on third-party vendors who are an integral part of the company's ability to process and ship produce. “This was valuable discovery in that we weren't responsible for direct administration, yet some exposure existed via third-party technology vendors,” Eldredge says.

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Markon now works closely with ZAG to monitor the organization’s external security posture to identify risks before they become a problem. “Ongoing monitoring and revisiting the security review should be done so that companies can stay on top of changes in the environment and security recommendations that are constantly evolving,” says Albert Brown, ZAG Director of Strategic Initiatives.

Eldredge has appreciated the outstanding IT support ZAG has provided over the years. “ZAG is an invaluable partner for me,” he says. “They have a great cross section of excellent engineers and equally important is their commitment to customer service. They take ownership of projects and they’re always on alert for network issues that might interrupt our operations.

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“With ZAG’s help, we’re constantly aware of potential threats and Markon’s systems are ever evolving to enhance security,” he says. “While we strive to enforce best practices, provide security training for Markon staff, and implement technology to protect against threats, ZAG has been key in ‘batting cleanup’ for Markon in providing counsel, implementing solutions and supporting Markon to reduce risk. From my perspective, Markon’s close relationship with ZAG is key to our success.” ■

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Follow Markon’s lead and turn technology into a competitive advantage today. Contact ZAG to learn how.