

CASE STUDY

How ZAG Uncovered Hidden Vulnerabilities In Pacific International Marketing's IT Ecosystem and Helped Them Become More Resilient and Secure

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They're constantly looking out for us, managing risks we don't even know about, and making sure we're protected."

Bryan Searcy,
IT Director, Pacific International Marketing



Founded in 1989, Pacific International Marketing (PIM) has grown to become one of the nation's leading produce companies.

PIM grows, packs, and processes more than 100 different commodities, shipping over 25 million packages to customers every year.

HIGHLIGHTS

CHALLENGES

- Existing MSP failing to protect and support the business
- IT Director working around the clock to keep on-prem infrastructure secure
- Worrying a breach could be around the corner
- Searching for a service provider to level up their IT environment

Challenges

Outdated technology infrastructure, changing MSP relationship, and emerging security threats

Back in 2018, IT Director Bryan Searcy was losing a lot of sleep. He was doing his utmost to manage the company's local systems, networks, and security—as well as those in multiple remote offices.

But he had too many balls to juggle, and his existing Managed Services Provider (MSP) was creating stress where they should have been easing it.



“Our MSP was the subject of an acquisition and they lost the culture and support levels I'd appreciated,” says Bryan. “I lost my confidence in their services and was afraid we were one step away from a catastrophic event that could bring the business to a halt.”

The challenge of PIM's MSP was only one reason for Bryan's spiking stress levels. With an on-prem data center and aging network to manage, Bryan was working around the clock to ensure their infrastructure was operational, updated, and protected.



“There was so much to do, from monitoring, to patching, to back-ups. I used to patch the servers manually myself on the weekend!” he says. “From powering and cooling our servers to keeping the network secure, there were so many things to worry about.”

Above all else, it was the issue of security that kept Bryan awake most at night.

SOLUTION

How ZAG helps PIM:

- Remotely manage monitoring, patching, and antivirus to keep every site protected
- By providing advice and consultancy on improving infrastructure
- Seamlessly migrate on-prem data center to the Cloud
- Replace aging Cisco network with Cisco Meraki
- Migrate on-prem email server online
- Strengthen security with Veeam Backup and multi-factor authentication

RESULTS

- Modern, resilient IT infrastructure that enables the business to be safe, efficient, and competitive
- Stays focused on core goals without being disrupted by subpar IT
- Seamless project management
- 'Priceless' partnership



“Without a comprehensive security solution from our service provider, I more or less relied on Windows patching to keep our workstations and servers safe,” says Bryan. “But if we suffered a breach, the worst-case scenario would be that we couldn’t get on our systems and servers, which could be devastating and grind the business to a halt.”

Without the confidence in PIM’s MSP relationship to carry out both day-to-day support and strategic direction, Bryan made the decision to end the agreement.



“I wasn’t comfortable with the support levels—and it was time to find somebody who was more responsive and had the expertise to level up our environment and improve our technology, practices, and security,” he says.

That’s when Bryan found ZAG. Everything was about to change for the better—including Bryan’s sleep.

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Solution

Modernizing their IT environment and practices, as well as protecting the business

When PIM heard about ZAG Technical Services and its outstanding track record in agribusiness, they knew they'd found the right partner.



"I was really excited to partner with ZAG," says Bryan. "We knew that they already supported a really large customer in the produce industry that we look up to, so it was a no-brainer for us to do business with ZAG."

Initially, ZAG took over PIM's remote monitoring management (RMM), including monitoring, patching, and antivirus, as well as picking up ad-hoc IT projects whenever Bryan needed extra support.



"With ZAG's RMM, all our computer workstations and servers were immediately covered by their antivirus software. Plus, updates download automatically so we're always protected," says Bryan. "It's reassuring to have such granular protection for both our local and remote equipment and great not to have to worry about any of that anymore."

ZAG's role expanded when PIM decided to move their headquarters to a larger site. For the move to be a success, PIM needed to improve their technology infrastructure.

Notably, Bryan had been mulling over migrating PIM's on-prem data center to a Cloud-based solution—and the office relocation felt like the ideal moment.

So ZAG carried out a deep assessment of their current environment to see if Cloud migration was the right fit for the business and would help them achieve more growth and success.



“Initially, I was a little worried about putting so much of our critical data in the Cloud, but ZAG demonstrated to us that Microsoft Azure was cost-effective, secure, and flexible, and also reduced the risk of owning hardware and maintaining it,” says Bryan.

“ZAG also gave me confidence because this wasn’t their first rodeo. They’d done migrations very successfully with other businesses before.”

Bryan was right. ZAG seamlessly managed the migration to Azure and Bryan promptly felt the benefit.



“There are a lot of things that you worry about when your infrastructure is on-prem, but you don’t need to worry when it’s all up in the Cloud,” says Bryan. “So my stress level came down exponentially and I’m the biggest cheerleader now when it comes to Microsoft Azure.”

ZAG continued to identify improvements to PIM’s network, infrastructure, and security. Consequently, PIM replaced its aging Cisco network equipment with Cisco Meraki switches and firewalls across eight locations; giving them better visibility and security across sites near and far.



“Cisco Meraki makes managing our infrastructure really easy from a central dashboard,” says Bryan. “It’s like a single pane of glass where I can see all of my sites, see how they’re connected, and understand what’s happening so much faster and more conveniently than before.”

In another project, ZAG migrated PIM’s on-prem email server online with Office 365, providing more cost-savings and efficiencies.



“Previously, I had to have difficult conversations with users when they hit mailbox limits,” says Bryan. “Now, with the licensing level we have with Office 365, users never run out of space and it’s nice to not have to deal with mailbox quotas.”

With protection and security so important to PIM, ZAG is currently helping them implement Veeam Backup. This tool helps ensure the business can continue to operate if they ever fall victim to a breach.



“With Veeam Backup, I’m backing-up snapshots of my critical servers every two hours, so I’m getting that comforting granularity of back-ups that I never had before,” explains Bryan.

In yet another boost to their security and resilience, ZAG helped PIM implement Cisco Duo multi-factor authentication (MFA). Implementing MFA can prevent as much as 80-90% of cyberattacks, according to the U.S. National Cybersecurity Chief.



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Results

Resilient systems that support business continuity, and a trusted partnership that's 'priceless'

With ZAG's support, PIM has improved its technology infrastructure, strengthened its security, and created an environment that enables the business to be efficient and competitive.



"ZAG is constantly looking out for us and managing risks we don't even know about," says Bryan. "They're constantly adding resilience to our systems, looking and listening to the latest threats, and making sure that we're protected."

By bringing their technologies, practices, and IT environment up to a more contemporary level, Pacific can keep focused on its core goals, without being distracted or disrupted by subpar IT.



"ZAG believes that our success is their success—and they really live that," says Bryan. "They care about making us successful and constantly looking for better ways to move the ball forward."

Bryan particularly appreciates how easy ZAG makes life for PIM whenever they manage an IT project.



"From beginning to end, when ZAG does projects, they lead it with the best people, they tell us exactly what's going on, they give us the scope and the timeline, and we know what it's going to cost us," says Bryan. "Everything they do is very methodical and makes a lot of sense, which reassures us that they're doing the right thing."

When asked about the value PIM gets from the partnership, Bryan says it's 'priceless.'



“You can’t put a dollar value on the experience and support that ZAG brings to our team,” he says. “Just having such an improved flow of information and communication, the fact we’re backed up better and more secure. What we get from the relationship is worth at least double what we pay.”

Bryan recommends ZAG to any IT leader looking to lower their total cost of service, reinforce security, and create better technology foundations for their business to grow.



“ZAG’s team is personable and knowledgeable, and just great people to work with,” says Bryan. “They dig into every detail of your technology and business, find out what your needs are, and create an end result that supports your goals.”

Without ZAG, Bryan says PIM would be less productive and less secure.



“We’d probably still be limping along with the old service provider and I’d be really stressed and frustrated,” he concludes. “Everything we’ve done with ZAG has been so worth it and our partnership is invaluable.”

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**Find out how ZAG can help
your agribusiness stay secure
and protected**

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