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GlobalSCAPE Keeps the Data Pipeline Flowing at Jordan & Skala Engineers.

Gaining access and collaborating on critical project files was once a small concern at Jordan & Skala Engineers. However, continued success and growth leads to increased staff, branch offices, and projects to be managed. As the small firm expanded—nearly doubling in size in three years—the task of accessing and sharing project data between offices one file at a time became a limiting factor in the effective growth of the company. What was once a small concern became a business-critical issue that demanded a solution.

So what does GlobalSCAPE WAFS mean to a firm like Jordan & Skala? It means the freedom to take on projects that demand talents and resources from all of their offices, thinking beyond the next file transfer, and thinking instead about the future of the company.

The Challenge.

Headquartered in Atlanta, GA, Jordan & Skala Engineers is an MEP (Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing) design firm with 150 employees located in five branch offices across the U.S—two of which were added in just the past two years. Some of their smaller, more specialized services, such as telecommunications, are fulfilled exclusively at their corporate office in Atlanta, where nearly half of the firm's overall staff is housed.

There was a time in the firm's history when collaboration between multiple offices was a rare occasion. As occasional file transfers were needed, remote PC control software facilitated the file sharing, with each project requiring a significant amount of manual setup. As the company continued to grow, Network Administrator Travis Smith began to realize the need for a scalable solution that wouldn't require hands-on interaction for each new file transfer.

Initially, Travis evaluated a WAN acceleration appliance solution. "In the end," Travis explained, "it had a wide range of features, but not enough of what really mattered." In Travis's opinion, the appliance approach was a cumbersome solution that would have complicated rather than simplifying matters. On top of that, Travis felt that their technology was not optimized for CAD data. "We wanted to find someone who really understood CAD and had a WAN solution that enabled our organization to deliver our projects more efficiently and cost effectively," Travis said.

The Solution.

“Some of our engineers still call today to ask me to send a file, or to let me know their file is ready to be uploaded,” Travis said as he laughed. “They just can’t fathom how their files are mirrored in real time. It gets them every time.” Having a seamless solution that would not impact how engineers access and work on project files was a key deliverable of this solution.

GlobalSCAPE WAFS provides file lock coherency and instantly mirrors changes to a file using byte-level differencing, compression, and encryption, so as soon as a file is saved or closed, only the changes to the files are moved across the WAN and appears in every other location on the network. WAFS guarantees that users always have the latest version of the file; and because the file changes move when they happen, files are available at the branch offices when the engineers need them. This means that users are never waiting for files to upload, download, or open across a network.

> “WAFS guarantees that users always have the latest version of the file.”

More important to Travis, however, is the automation. “All I do is set it and forget it,” Travis said. “When a project is going to require file access and collaboration across multiple branch offices, I set up the folders once and the engineers can begin working without pause.” GlobalSCAPE WAFS is even flexible enough for Travis to set the unique permission levels that Jordan & Skala requires on individual project folders, and maintain those permissions across the WAN on each local server.

Complex Files.

Another major benefit that Travis has found with GlobalSCAPE WAFS is that it was designed with CAD in mind. “We don’t necessarily have a need for complex 3D geometries, but our files are nonetheless complex in a way that is unique to CAD,” Travis explained. As MEP engineers, Jordan & Skala references external CAD files from the architects, called ‘base plans.’ In addition, MEP plans require a series of drawings such as details, section views, elevations, and schedules—all of which reference one another. With such a reliance on external references, Travis said, “Any given drawing may only be 1 MB in size itself, but it could have up to 10 MB of x-refs tied to it.”

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Despite the complexity of Jordan & Skala's files, GlobalSCAPE WAFS is able to mirror the changes—even changes that occur in externally referenced drawings—to ensure files remain fully coherent at all sites. The most crucial of these external references is the base plan itself, which also changes as the architect's design progresses. As Jordan & Skala periodically receives updated base plans that can affect their designs, Travis simply replaces the base plan on the central server and the change is reflected instantly at all other sites. With GlobalSCAPE WAFS, each engineer in every location is always kept up-to-date with latest base plan.

> "Every location is always kept up-to-date."

Looking Ahead.

According to Travis, "the principals may not know how it does it, but they have taken note of what GlobalSCAPE can do." As Jordan & Skala looks to the future, they plan on continued growth in even more locations. With GlobalSCAPE WAFS, Travis and the rest of the IT staff are able to focus on planning for that growth, not waiting to react to the challenges that it might bring.

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