



“MIMIX HA for i5/OS is a huge sales tool for AMPORTS—we can assure major automakers that we have a disaster recovery site and everything is backed up.”

Gordon Leary, Senior Programmer/Analyst
AMPORTS

Business Profile

Company name:
AMPORTS

Headquarters:
Jacksonville, Florida (USA)

Industry:
Vehicle Processing for Major
Automobile Manufacturers
Worldwide

Employees:
Approximately 800

- Business Environment:
- AMPORTS is one of the largest portside vehicle processing businesses in the U.S.
 - Over 40 years of experience, with customers including Ford, GM, Volvo, Hyundai, Porsche and Kia, among others
 - Approximately 525,000 vehicles shipped per year
 - Six nationwide port facilities in Jacksonville, Florida; Brunswick, Georgia; Benicia, California; and three in Baltimore, Maryland
 - Corporate IT and Engineering Departments are located in Baltimore, Maryland at the Corporate Branch Office at the Atlantic Terminal facility

Implementation Team:
Vision Solutions
AMPORTS IT Team

Vision Solutions Product:
MIMIX HA for i5/OS

Critical Issue

Major automakers worldwide rely on AMPORTS for portside vehicle processing services including damage inspections, repairs, washing and accessorizing. A custom port-tracking application records each time an AMPORTS employee touches a car, and status reports are sent to manufacturers, sometimes as often as every 30 minutes. AMPORTS is continuously graded for on-time deliveries and other metrics. Disaster recovery is a customer-driven requirement: automakers like GM and Ford require real-time data, and that's business critical for AMPORTS.

Results

- Ensures that disaster recovery requirements are addressed for critical business applications.
- Supports sales and customer retention, as major automakers expect disaster recovery capabilities.
- Ensures that operations can continue on the backup system and customer reporting can continue even if an outage were to occur.
- Reduces management time and enables proactive approach to identifying and eliminating system problems with MIMIX AutoGuard functionality.

Technologies

- MIMIX® HA for i5/OS®
- Mission-critical port-tracking system, all custom code
- JD Edwards® Enterprise One™ Financial Management Software
- Company systems accessed by AMPORTS employees via approximately 150 PCs and about 80 handheld radio frequency (RF) devices
- One customer has an Ethernet card in the AMPORTS production server to exchange real-time communications and data with its own IBM® server
- Two IBM System i™ 520 servers, production in Baltimore, Maryland and remote backup in Jacksonville, Florida

Business Challenge

At six nationwide port facilities, AMPORTS provides a wide range of services for vehicles being imported and exported by its exacting customer base, which includes Ford, Hyundai, Porsche and Volvo.

“We say that we’re like an extension to the factory,” said Gordon Leary, Senior Programmer/Analyst, AMPORTS. “We unload and inspect the cars, store them, put on external accessories like roof racks or mud guards, and even fix defects if that’s called for, all based on detailed specifications from the automakers.”

AMPORTS provides status reports to the automakers via FTP files and other methods based on the customer's service expectations. In some cases, sophisticated customers have live input into AMPORTS' operations. Volvo, for example, specifies cars and tasks for AMPORTS employees using VDM files exchanged directly between the two companies' IBM systems. Employees working in AMPORTS' vast parking lots access this information on handheld computers.



Just one hour of downtime for the over-\$50-million-a-year company could cost upwards of tens of thousands of dollars. And create major logistical problems. “Without the port tracking application, we’d be in trouble, it would essentially bring our business to a standstill,” said Leary.

Solution

AMPORTS’ executives gave the green light to install MIMIX HA for i5/OS from Vision Solutions to meet its high availability and disaster recovery needs.

“We were pleased when we got this directive, because we had been talking about a move to high availability, mainly for backups, for years. AMPORTS has a fairly small IT staff—five people for the entire company,” said Leary.

The implementation went smoothly, and Leary has high praise for the Vision Solutions team. “The Vision Solutions support staff return our calls very promptly, and they have the right answers,” he explained.

Using MIMIX, AMPORTS replicates its business-critical systems, the port-tracking application and JD Edwards financials. “It has been a long time since we had any offline time. We try to do a switch test every quarter, and those are successful,” he said.

The installation of MIMIX with AutoGuard went very well, and gave the AMPORTS IT team the confidence that everything was replicating properly. “A Vision Solutions tech specialist worked with us, doing the converting and testing, and he taught us a lot.”

The AutoGuard functionality is basically a real-time summary of what’s happening in AMPORTS’ HA environment, according to Leary. “I can see what’s going on, what’s not right, and fix it quickly before it becomes a problem. This is much faster than using audit logs as we did in the past. We ran the logs, but often didn’t have time to analyze them. With AutoGuard, the facts are right in front of us, and we can take care of issues right away.”

“Having High availability and disaster recovery capability in place has been a huge sales tool for us. The Big Three [automakers] and others are big on HA/DR, too, and having MIMIX demonstrates our commitment to them,” said Leary.



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High Availability Disaster Recovery Systems and Data Management