



Putting Information Technology to Work

Old Technology Gets a new Life at Catering Firm

[Marigold Catering](#), one of Cleveland's leading catering firms, is known not only for its high-end, imaginative food, but also for its attention to detail and service. Computers play a critical role in scheduling and tracking the details of every job, helping event managers deliver impressive and worry-free events. Marigold uses computers to schedule catering jobs and personnel, organize recipes and menus, manage inventory, track outside vendors, and handle basic business functions.

The Challenge:

Marigold first called the SITO Group in August, 2000 to help with some network problems. One of the computers was crashing on almost an hourly basis, bringing the network and the other computers down with it.

Marigold had 3 Pentium-class, 300 MHz computers running Windows 98. The 3 PCs were networked together to share files and printers. They used a tape drive to backup files. However, without procedures in place, backups were not reliable or current.

Every employee installed and configured their own software. Consequently, every machine was a little different.

Marigold Catering's Objectives:

- Improve reliability
- Stay within strict budget guidelines
- If possible, extend the life of existing systems
- Phase in any necessary upgrades and new hardware and software, as budget permitted

The Solution:

Improving reliability was the pressing concern. We quickly discovered that the network had been misconfigured, causing many of the lock-ups. *Reconfiguring the network markedly improved reliability.* No additional hardware or software was required.

As budget permitted, memory was added to existing computers. The instability of Windows 98 was made worse by the limited amount of memory on Marigold's computers. Both performance and reliability improved with the addition of memory.

We decided to *designate one of the existing computers as a key system, and migrate it to Windows 2000.* Windows 2000 provided a much more stable platform than Windows 98 for handling the critical functions of this computer. We also reorganized the file structure of the network, relocating all shared files to this key system.



IT change management procedures were implemented to standardize the software configuration for each machine. In the past, everyone did their own thing. These new procedures not only have improved reliability, they also make problem resolution easier. The end result is that Marigold can keep its service budget contained.

Improved back-up procedures were put in place to ensure that Marigold could recover quickly if something happened to its data. Eventually, the tape drive that Marigold was using for backups died. It was an opportune time to install a server to replace the old unit. The server provides dedicated file storage for the network in addition to being used for system backups. We chose a Linux-based server that was easy to install and is easy to administer.

Marigold had old, hard-to-read monitors. As budget permitted, new monitors were purchased. By reducing eye strain, the new monitors have a positive impact on productivity. The difference in quality is so noticeable that employees feel like they have a new computer.

Results:

- ✚ Over the course of 3 years, Marigold Catering has added four more computers to their initial three computers (that they are still using). The company now has six workstations and one dedicated server. They still run Windows 98 on the two of the older computers. The other computers are equipped with Windows 2000, Windows ME and Windows XP.
- ✚ The SITO Group helped Marigold find cost effective ways to improve reliability and performance. We were able to extend the life of the company's systems, while at the same providing a migration path to implement new technologies as the budget permits.
- ✚ We've also worked to find ways to minimize the number of service calls. Stable software platforms, procedures and a low- maintenance server not only improve productivity, but also make Marigold's systems easy to manage and change.

The SITO Group puts information technology to work for small and medium-sized organizations. We help you select, source, install, and keep your computers help you

- Stretch your computer budget
- Improve reliability and performance of existing systems
- Phase in newer, improved technologies and productivity tools