

Powering Interpath's Network Based Application Services

When you walk into Mission Control at the Interpath Operations Center in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, you'd swear you were looking at a group of people monitoring and controlling a space shuttle launch. Before you are twelve large color displays showing all kinds of real-time network data, network maps, weather information and international news. But the people that work here aren't with NASA. They are with Interpath Communications and their job is to monitor and manage the company's state-of-the-art telecommunications network and the applications it delivers.

Interpath provides a comprehensive suite of information and communication services — from initial consulting through network design and installation, to service and support. One of the most exciting areas of Interpath's approach to service is the Virtual Private Application (VPA). VPAs are mission-critical business applications which leverage IP-based technologies on both Virtual Private Networks and across the public Internet. Interpath's VPAs are comprised of a suite of E-commerce, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and communications applications available to businesses in a highly secure and reliable manner. E-commerce products include: business-to-consumer and catalog presentation; business-to-business supply chain management and payment processing. Interpath will be offering ERP in the areas of financial, HR, sales force automation and customer relationship management.

As part of the full service approach, Interpath offers Web-hosting, as well as, direct Internet access. Providing support to business customers are teams that provide web-site design and management and application development.

In the telecommunications area, Interpath offers long distance and local phone service. The company also provides bundled products such as voice and data communications via a dedicated T-1 line.

Interpath is unique because of its comprehensive suite of products meeting business customers' Internet and telecommunications needs. By integrating all of these services, the company has created a new category of service provider: Network-Based Application Service Provider (NASP), providing customers with the innovation of IP-based services and the reliability of the public telephone network.

A key component of the Interpath Operations Center is Server City. This 13,000 square foot raised floor facility houses Interpath's Windows NT and UNIX based servers that support much of the Internet operations. Other servers that are owned by Interpath customers and are operated and maintained by Interpath are housed here as well.

The entire Interpath Operations Center is so critical that the support systems such as power, air conditioning and intrusion detection systems were carefully designed to never go down. Even the walls surrounding the interior rooms are special. They are constructed with an imbedded steel mesh. This helps prevent the penetration of debris that could be thrown about as the result of an



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exceptionally violent storm that damages the exterior walls or windows of the building. The Interpath Operations Center is the cornerstone of the organization and must be operational 24x7x365.

"Everything supporting the Interpath Operations Center is redundant. From the Uninterruptible Power System to the Power Distribution Unit to the Air Conditioning System, it's all backed-up by a system of equal capability," said Earl Page, Facilities Engineering Manager. "We even have two fiber cable connections into the facility, in case one is accidentally cut."

With power being so critical, Interpath designed the power distribution system to include a Powerware 9315 Hot Sync® Redundant Uninterruptible Power System (UPS) from Powerware Corporation (formerly Exide Electronics). The UPS system, consisting of parallel, redundant 300kVA modules, provides unmatched reliability and availability. Each module has the ability to synchronize and support the load independently of the other module. The unique Powerware Hot Sync technology does not require a communication link between modules, eliminating a single point of failure. The configuration also allows full maintenance to be performed on both modules without the need for an external bypass or removing the load from conditioned power. The UPS supports all critical operations including Server City, Mission Control and 180 staff offices, including the customer call center.

The Powerware 9315 is capable of powering the entire operation for 38 minutes. But Interpath went one step further and installed a 1750-kilowatt diesel generator to feed the UPS in the event of a power outage. The generator kicks in just 7 seconds after detection of failure of the incoming power. Even if the generator is used, the UPS continues to condition the power. Unconditioned generator power is often "dirty" and can cause problems with the operation of sensitive equipment.

The power system was installed and is maintained by Carolina Power and Light (CP&L), a leading electric utility serving much of North and South Carolina and Interpath's parent company. To insure continuous service and prevent a problem before it occurs, CP&L tests the system weekly and sends a complete test report to Interpath. So customers concerned about the availability of their Internet service could not ask for a better scenario: a fully redundant, state-of-the-art power system, backed by a leading electric utility.

Innovative product lines, a meticulously designed facility, a state-of-the-art power system and a focus on reliability and availability serve as a firm foundation for Interpath's Network-Based Application Services.

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