

Wendy's "Secret Recipe of Quality"

Information technology director talks about testing recovery plan

Visit the Wendy's International Web site and you'll see the claim that "quality is our recipe" but this is more than a company marketing-speak according to Ed Ohanian, the company's director of systems quality and certification, it is a company attitude in everything we do. Ohanian knows that quality comes from processes, not just products, and although the company offers made-to-order hamburgers and other old-fashioned favorites, it's a comprehensive technology infrastructure that creates the efficiencies and streamlines the business intelligence necessary to serve millions of hungry consumers each day.

For more than 12 years, Ohanian has helped to develop and support the technology capabilities of the \$2.2 billion company. His primary charge now is quality certification, change control, and disaster recovery for the Information Technologies department - which services the corporate enterprise, including more than 1,400 company owned restaurant locations. Recognizing the diversity and geography separating locations and information, Wendy's has developed safeguards to secure the company's data and sensitive information, especially relevant now that the company accepts credit cards.

As part of his quality certification program, Ohanian uses Platform Lab, a Columbus, Ohio-based non-profit firm that provides information technology business services. This low-cost, easily accessible facility offers an ongoing resource for pre-production software testing and mainframe disaster recovery. These frequent "check-ups", conducted intermittently for five weeks over a 12 month period, offer assurances that "mission critical" business functions and proprietary information such as payroll, sales and forecasting data are successfully recoverable and protected, in the event of a disaster. Just as importantly, testing and troubleshooting technology every one to two months can prevent significant financial losses and excessive liability. Ohanian states that "We are currently in the processes of developing and testing plans for all of our system, and Platform Labs provides an integral piece in this process."

Ohanian recalls one test scenario of failed credit card batch transactions. Had similar circumstances occurred in a real world environment, it would have cost the company substantially (the company processes numerous transactions daily in credit and debit cards).

This is the second year the company has contracted with Platform Lab. According to Ohanian, "the price and technology offered was right! Why would we not do something like this?" Although Wendy's does have access to other testing facilities made available through their hardware or software service providers, Ohanian explains that these facilities can provide disadvantages including: cost, travel, and less flexibility.

Platform Lab eliminated many of these issues. Since it is based in Central Ohio, Ohanian doesn't have to schedule and pay for travel time. Additionally, he points out that the facility doesn't require a monthly fee, the affordability allows for more frequent testing opportunities, and increased flexibility in scheduling.

Ohanian probably values Platform Lab most for the off-site testing. Since the lab is equipped with a network and

mainframe capabilities, it creates a more accurate representation of a recovery effort.

"It allows us to truly test our process and recovery plan," says Ohanian. "We can create checkpoints, identify missed opportunities and realize failures in systems and processes.

Many companies attempt to test on-site but if they forget a disk or tape, they'll just go to their desk to retrieve it. You don't have that opportunity and luxury in an actual recovery situation. Testing at Platform Lab assures we have proof of actionable steps versus planned steps."

That's not to say that Platform Lab is without its limitations. According to Ohanian, other companies may not find it as robust as some testing facilities or they may prefer to do some testing in-house to reduce cost further. Yet it's also evident that Ohanian considers Platform Lab to be an integral part of his company's disaster recovery planning. He may not be serving hot, fresh food, but with help from Platform Lab, quality is still the recipe.