US NET
DATA CENTER SOLUTIONS

WHAT IS THE WEAKEST LINK IN YOUR INFRASTRUCTURE?

by Dustin McLeod, Vice President of Sales, US Net Communications

TRADITIONALLY, FACILITIES MANAGERS ARE CHARGED WITH ENSURING THAT THE PHYSICAL PLANT, UTILITIES AND SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS ARE SUCH THAT A BUSINESS CAN CONTINUE TO FUNCTION, EVEN IN THE EVENT OF A DISASTER. IT PERSONNEL ARE TYPICALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, OPERATIONS AND DATA PROTECTION.

As we have become increasingly dependent on the data center to support business processes, the data center is where traditional facilities and IT responsibilities mesh. It is imperative that both sides understand how each relates to the other.

As business continuity professionals Nelson and van Leent point out:

> *The main causes of data center downtime are human error and hardware / system failure. While the errors usually made are not intentional, even small mistakes can lead to big disasters. Most of the time these hardware failures occur due to the data center being wrongly designed, maintained or managed. Downtime is also often caused by uneven cooling or power quality issues.**

When it comes to structured cabling, it is rare that a system failure will be caused by the "hardware."

It is far more likely the case that "human error" comes into play when it comes to structured cabling.

That "human error" can be something as simple as what happens when a work order says "Move jumper cable from port 1 to port 5" and when that's done, connectivity to the CPU is lost.

If pathways, terminations, testing, labeling, and documentation are right at the start, this system failure can be avoided. It not, a lot of time is spent troubleshooting to find out where the error occurred.

James I. Nelson and Edward van Leent, "What Business Continuity Professionals Need to Know About Data Centers," http://www.disaster-resource.com, 2008.

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

Facilities and IT personnel need to:

1 Understand and apply industry standards for structured cabling

2 Select the appropriate cabling technology for current and future applications

3 Ensure that installers are using proper testing techniques and procedures

4 Negotiate effective maintenance contracts the ensure the "best bang for the buck" from structured cabling contractors

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