

Agriculture leader Demeter Corporation **grows** its operations with help from AT&T Tech360SM and AT&T Tech360SM Backup and Go

- **Business needs** - Demeter Corporation needed technical support for its office computers and other equipment, and a way to protect its important financial data.
- **Networking solution** - AT&T Tech360SM helps keep the company's equipment virtually in peak condition by providing on-demand, remote IT services, and Backup and Go helps safeguard vital information in a highly-secure cloud environment.
- **Business value** - Ongoing, remote IT support improves operations, increases staff productivity and saves money. The highly secure backup for cloud data with unlimited storage enhances business continuity and peace of mind.
- **Industry focus** - Agriculture
- **Size** - Privately held

About the Demeter Corporation

For more than three decades the Demeter Corporation has operated successful rice farms in Rio Linda, California. Rice growing is a very specialized endeavor; only six U.S. states have the proper climate to support the crop. Demeter's farmland spans Sacramento and Sutter counties in north Central California. The company employs six full-time staff year-round and adds several part-time employees during pre-harvest and post-harvest season.

The situation

As a small business, Demeter has a very lean staff. The company's full-time employees are responsible for all aspects of its operations, from its extensive farming duties to purchasing, payroll, and other necessary administrative processes. Without an IT specialist on staff, employees struggled to keep their computers, phones, and other office equipment running well. The company needed a way to keep its office equipment in top shape to support its business; it also wanted a highly secure way to protect its financial records and other important files.

Solution

Demeter chose AT&T Tech360SM, which gives the company access to a 24/7 virtual IT department helping to ensure that computers, printers, and other devices are always up and running. The U.S.-based service helps the small business protect its equipment, software, and files from viruses and other problems. Demeter also uses AT&T Backup and Go, which backs up the company's important files by automatically saving copies in the cloud.

Office management in the digital age

Rice is one of the top ten produce crops in the United States. Demeter Corporation's location in the Sacramento River Valley is especially conducive to growing rice. The company's farm has thrived in north Central California for 31 years.

Farming has changed a great deal since the company began operations. Farms today produce more crops on fewer acres, thanks to advancements in plant breeding, precision planting, soil testing, and better fertilizer.

Supporting agricultural operations has also changed a great deal. Demeter Corporation relies on many of the same financial, administrative, and management tools that large businesses use to operate. Patricia Rios has been the Bookkeeper and Office Manager for Demeter for more than a decade.

She says office management has become more challenging because almost all equipment today is

internet-enabled. "Our phones, the computers, the fax, and printer and even our alarm systems are connected," she said.

Connectivity increases the equipment's value to the company, to be sure, but it also makes maintenance more difficult.

A better way to stay connected

The internet is an important part of office operations, Rios said. The company communicates with its vendors primarily through email and uses the internet to support financial operations.



"Keeping our equipment running is a challenge. If we developed a computer problem, I usually had to take the computer to a shop 30 minutes away."

Patricia Rios

Bookkeeper and Office Manager, Demeter Corporation

When the internet connection goes down, or when a computer or other equipment develops a problem, staff are unable to do their jobs. As a small business, Demeter doesn't have an IT department. "Keeping our equipment running is a challenge," Rios said. "If we developed a computer problem, I usually had to take the computer to a shop 30 minutes away in Woodland."

Unplugging the computer and hauling it to the repair shop took more than an hour out of Rios's workday. The office could be without a computer for days while it was being repaired, and then Rios would lose another hour or more to pick it up and reinstall it in the office.

Demeter needed a more efficient way to keep its office equipment up and running.

Unlimited access to IT support

Rios said she stumbled on a great solution to her challenge one day when speaking with her AT&T account representative. Demeter had become an AT&T client when Rios joined the staff and found significant problems with the existing communications networks.

"Things weren't good," she said. "We had outages. And dealing with the provider was such a hassle." She received permission from the company owner to switch the company's landlines, cell phones, and data network provider. "And so I chose AT&T and we've been with AT&T ever since," she said.

Rios was immediately interested when her account rep suggested AT&T Tech360SM, which provides 24/7 access to support from certified technicians. Demeter's owner saw the value in the available computer tune-ups, mobile device support, and tutorial training that the solution provides, and approved it without hesitation.

"We're such a small office and don't have an IT department," Rios said. "AT&T Tech360SM is wonderful. Now whenever we have a problem I have someone to talk to and someone to help me through whatever challenges I have."

Back in business

The solution has made life much easier for Rios and her team. "We have our own private tech people. I just call them and tell them what the problem is," she said. "They fix me up and there we go, I'm back in business."

"We're such a small office and don't have an IT department. Now whenever we have a problem I have somewhere to go, someone to talk to, and someone to help me through whatever challenges I have."

Patricia Rios

Bookkeeper and Office Manager, Demeter Corporation



The certified U.S.-based technicians were a big help in solving an ongoing email problem for Demeter when the company's inboxes were filled with hundreds of repetitive emails. Rios said she worked diligently on the problem without success. "Then I called AT&T Tech360SM and told them what was going on. They were able to help me fix it with just a couple of clicks. Those guys are awesome."

Rios said operations are much smoother since Demeter has added AT&T Tech360SM. "Whenever things go wrong, it always seems to happen at the worst possible time," she said. "Now we just call these guys up and they're our lifesavers."

AT&T Tech360SM is able to solve most difficulties remotely. But it's also helpful in diagnosing hardware problems. "I didn't know my hard drive was going out and they helped me so much." Thanks to the service, Demeter saved the cost of having an IT shop diagnose her problem.

Replacing the hard drive was a simple matter, after which the AT&T technicians were able to help Rios reinstall her programs and data. "I called Tech Support and they walked me through putting everything back on my computer," she said. "It's like having your own IT people. I can't even tell you how nice it is," she said. "Being in a small company, it's great."

Automatic, continuous, unlimited backup

AT&T was also able to help Demeter improve business continuity with a solution that better protected its vital business data. "I have a lot of sensitive

information on my computer and if I lost that I don't know what would happen," Rios said.

She had an external hard drive that she used to back up all Demeter's financial files at the end of every day. The solution wasn't foolproof. She understood that she could stand to lose as much as a day's worth of files if something happened to her computer before she performed the daily backup. And she had to remember to start the manual backup process at the end of every workday.

Also, a fire, flood, or other disaster at the office could wipe out both the files on her computer and the files backed up on her external drive. Rios began looking for a better way to ensure that the company's important files were protected.

Her account rep suggested Backup and Go, which provides automatic, continuous data backup with unlimited storage of Demeter's selected files to the cloud. "If we lost this data, we'd be up the creek without a paddle," Rios said. "Backup and Go is great. I don't have to do anything. It's always backing up our information."



Rios said she feels relief since the organization's important files are now protected and more secure. She and her team can access the backed-up data from a computer or smartphone and can share documents and collaborate virtually whenever they wish.

A small business lifesaver

Rios said that AT&T Backup and Go and AT&T Tech360SM both save time and money for Demeter. "I couldn't tell you how much, but I'm sure it's a lot, because when there are problems with the computer or emails or the internet I now have somewhere to turn," she said.

"I used to work for big employers who had IT and HR staff, but as a small business we don't have that

here," she said. "Without the tech support, I'd do what I could, but sometimes I'd wind up spending hours trying to figure things out and fix it myself."

"Now I just call AT&T Tech360SM, and it's amazing how much they can help me. I make an appointment and they're quick about turnaround. They can usually help me within a couple of hours."

Rios said she appreciates the ongoing interest from AT&T after she uses AT&T Tech360SM. "I always get follow-up emails. The communication is great, and the people are always nice. I have a smile every time I hang up from AT&T," she said. "AT&T Tech360SM is a lifesaver for us."