

## Lafarge North America



### Lafarge ‘Cements’ Its Data Centers in New Locations

Construction material supplier leverages Dimension Data’s logistical, technical and project management expertise to move its mission-critical data centers.

#### Industry

Manufacturing

#### Country

North America

#### Challenge

Relocating mission-critical data centers to facilitate for future growth

#### Solution

Data Center & Storage Solutions

#### Executive Summary

Lafarge North America recently approached Dimension Data to assist with moving its production and disaster recovery data centers to new locations to facilitate future growth. The project was completed in three months with minimal disruption to the company’s 10,000+ users located at 800+ sites across North America. Dimension Data also provided cabling expertise and coordinated vendor recertification for this project.

#### Client Overview

A world leader in building materials, Lafarge extracts resources from the heart of the earth to make materials to bring to the heart of business. Present in over 70 countries, the Group responds to the world’s demand for housing and infrastructure. Lafarge North America is the largest supplier of construction materials in the U.S. and Canada. The company produces and sells cement, ready-mixed concrete, gypsum wallboard, aggregates, asphalt and related products in more than 1,000 facilities in North America.

#### Business Challenge

Lafarge experienced rapid growth in terms of its power, cooling and space requirements for its data centers. Lafarge’s production site was located in Ashburn, Virginia, and its disaster recovery center in Lisle, Illinois. Both sites were leased from a data center provider.

Brent Wolfram, lead architect of IT-Enterprise Infrastructure at Lafarge in North America, elaborates: “The initial target of the data centers was to house the ERP environment for all our North American sites. However, we experienced unexpected growth and also began rapid consolidation and centralization of services to our data center, which subsequently triggered an increase in floor space and power consumption in our data center environments.”

Lafarge had to do several small expansions and eventually ran out of space at the primary data center. Also, its data center provider ran out of space and power at the secondary data center. “Many critical projects and business initiatives were backing up due to the fact that we couldn’t add additional capacity to our data centers,” adds Wolfram.

Lafarge’s data center provider could provide the company with space for its disaster recovery site in Oakbrook, Illinois. The production site in Virginia could be expanded by adding space in a newly completed building in the same data center campus.

#### Results

- ▲ Effective program management to coordinate different contractors
- ▲ Using data center expertise to ensure minimal disruption to end users during the moves
- ▲ Exploiting relationships with vendors to ensure recertification of equipment
- ▲ Using technical expertise to build cabling plant

Wolfram says: “Our IT team had to focus on the availability of our organization’s business applications and infrastructure, and we did not want to deal with the issues related to the physical logistics of the data center moves. We wanted to partner with a company that could handle all the tasks that are not core to what we do.”

Lafarge traditionally bought networking and security equipment from Dimension Data. “Lafarge has worked with Dimension Data for the last three years on several projects, and we have a good working relationship. We wanted to give Dimension Data an opportunity to show what it could do as far as a professional services engagement on a larger scale. We made it clear the criticality of the project and that it had to go perfectly,” says Wolfram.

### Solution Provided

Lafarge required that Dimension Data provide program management and logistical planning to ensure the physical relocation of systems at both sites. “We formed a project management team on our side, which worked very closely with Dimension Data. This joint team worked very well together, partly due to the good communication between all the parties,” says Wolfram.



first, applications had the ability to failover to the disaster recovery site during the move of the production site, eliminating the need for downtime.”

Wolfram comments: “The feedback that we got from various levels of the organization was that the move went smoothly. Dimension Data’s expertise helped to minimize the impact on business operations during major activities. There were no unplanned outages or issues. In short, it was done to perfection.”

Lafarge also used the relocation project as an opportunity to update its cable plant. Once the equipment arrived, Dimension Data used its cabling expertise to lay cables between the racks and distribution frames.

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Brent Wolfram, Lead Architect, IT-Enterprise Infrastructure for Lafarge in North America

Kris Domich, principal consultant for Data Centers and Storage Solutions at Dimension Data, says: “Our scope of work included seeking out the contractors who were responsible for the physical labor of uninstalling, packaging, preparing, and transporting the equipment for the move – as well as the subsequent unloading and re-racking of the new equipment in the new data center space.”

To meet Lafarge’s requirement of no disruption to its end users, Dimension Data moved the disaster recovery site first. The company then conducted a series of tests in a period of time between moves to ensure the disaster recovery site was operational and could support a fail-over from the production site. “Moving the disaster recovery facility first was a good test for all of us to work out the processes and fine-tune our procedures prior to the primary data center move,” comments Wolfram.

Domich agrees: “Once we were confident that the disaster site was working optimally, we moved the production site. Because we moved the secondary site

Additionally, Dimension Data also coordinated vendor recertification for this project. “We worked with HP and EMC to ensure that the critical server and storage systems could be recertified so that they could continue to be covered under maintenance and warranty. This entailed working closely with HP and EMC to run a series of tests on the equipment to ensure that no damage had taken place during the move,” says Domich.

### Value Derived

Wolfram comments: “We were very impressed with Dimension Data’s work. The company helped to provide us with the capacity to facilitate growth in our data center environment for next three to five years, which is critical to our business.”

Domich explains that Dimension Data had to execute on difficult requirements during the project. “The old areas where the data centers were located were somewhat long and narrow and not very well distributed or easily navigated. We had to ensure a lot

of coordination to keep a large number of people constantly moving in and out of the data centers with equipment in very tight quarters," he says.

Lafarge also wanted to start testing immediately after the equipment had arrived in the data centers. This involved engaging application and systems' owners – and, in some cases, users -- at once. Dimension Data also had to manage these efforts and rotate these teams in and out of the centers to ensure that people were fresh enough to continue working through a 30-hour period without a break.

Wolfram concludes: "We are absolutely satisfied with how the coordination of the joint project management effort played out. We worked long hours together to make sure it went off without a hitch."