



## Case Study

### The Client

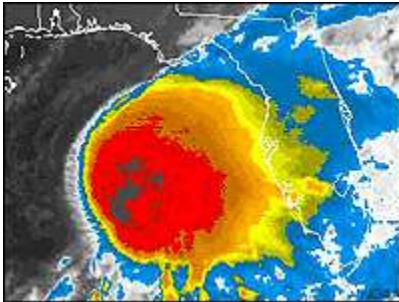
Gordon Hargrove & James P.A. is a Florida law firm headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., with an office in Orlando. The firm's lawyers provide legal and business counsel in all areas of civil litigation including employment, intellectual property, maritime, media, telecommunication, medical malpractice and products liability issues.

Chief Operating Officer Jim Nations explains that "Our firm is a civil litigation firm, a niche player, a smaller firm that serves Fortune 100 clients with names that anybody would recognize. We serve those clients throughout the state of Florida and across the Southeastern US."

*"The driving force of this for us is maintaining the face of the firm and our ability to communicate with our clients, meet their emergency needs and be able to communicate with them."*

### The Business Challenge

"We had Hurricane Katrina hit us in July and Hurricane Wilma in October. In both storms our building lost power, but in Hurricane Wilma the storm happened on a Monday from 9am to 1pm. Four hours I never want to live through again." exclaims Nations.



"After that storm we fortunately had minimal loss of life in our area, but we did suffer a complete loss of all communications, loss of basic utilities; power, water, telephone landlines, and cellphones were spotty at best. We lost all ability to communicate. Because our building lost power our servers were down and we were not able to receive emails. E-mail sent through your company's e-mail server tries to reach you for about 48 hours after which it quits trying and we'll never get that e-mail. Our servers were down from Monday morning until Saturday afternoon, five business days plus another day. It's likely that we lost a lot of critical information because of that. We of course reached out to critical clients, vendors, and retrieved a lot of information. It didn't happen in a vacuum but its a huge inconvenience for someone to remember who they sent an e-mail to at Gordon, Hargrove & James last week."

"The face of the firm was not kept up," explains Jim Nations. "Although there was a financial issue which can be overcome or insured, the fact that you're not reachable and not able to respond to clients' needs is not acceptable for other than the bare necessary period that the storm is in your area. The driving force of this for us is maintaining the face of the firm and our ability to communicate with our clients, meet their emergency needs and be able to communicate with them."

"Our clients are people who certainly understand the predicament when we're in a hurricane. But we don't want five or six days to go by without the ability to communicate and receive their communication to us. The fact that we had a storm focused in Fort Lauderdale doesn't deny the fact that they still need us to meet their needs outside South Florida in several states in the southeast US. While the court systems in Broward and Dade Counties certainly had an understanding and compassion on delays and problems, we can't depend on the courts in other places like Pensacola to say "ok, you don't have to come deal with us today."

**"Quite bluntly, if our firm is not able to weather the storm successfully then our clients would pick a firm that could. We have to plan and work by their perceptions & rules not by ours"**

### LAN Associates' Solution

According to Jim Nations, "A short period of outage, a day or less, is acceptable but the backup plans and remote servers we've implemented with LAN Associates as our advisor and implementation team assure that we will be up & running to receive emails and be able to correspond with our clients, retrieve documents stored on our computers and make necessary filings with the courts or mailings within a day without compromising our employee's personal safety."

"The ability to be able to receive those emails is something that will go on continuously through this Category 5 bunker-type facility we've set the servers up in. Then, as soon as it is safe, our employees can resume work operations, perhaps in a remote place such as employee homes that are still functional, our Orlando office, or we can send employees to Atlanta to work in a rented hotel



suite. Because all we need is an internet connection from anywhere in the world we are able to receive emails, retrieve documents, correspond and resume the minimal necessary functions so that our clients basic & emergency needs are met. That's the definition of success."



### **Are you confident that the solution is secure?**

Security is obviously important to us. All of our work is of a highly confidential nature. Everything is encrypted at the highest level. both communications to the site, at the site, and anyplace we connect outside to that remote site, just as it is from this building. We're very confident that the backup bunker environment is just as secure as our environment here. Both have onsite security, biometrics, tons of security, a Fort Knox type environment. There are many clients using that bunker facility whose security needs are even higher than ours and they are confident of the security in that facility."

"This is America at its best. Because of the storms last year businesses created opportunities for smaller businesses like ours to be able to put in the types of processes we've put in. They didn't exist before last year. It wasn't feasible. Banks, financial institutions, hotels have to have redundancy upon redundancy because of their size, magnitude, worldwide operations, and regulatory issues. Unless there's some legal or regulatory issue, small businesses don't have to do that. It wasn't financially feasible. Now it is."

## **Results**

### ***Benefits***

"This storm taught us a lot. Our firm has been in existence since 1988. Prior to Hurricane Wilma we had never been out of communications for such a long period of time. Nothing of this magnitude had every happened where 97% of South Florida was without power for an extended period of time."

"One great benefit to our day-to-day operations is that the redundant facility adds a second level of backup. Data is backed up electronically within moments at our remote servers. If a document or e-mail was inadvertently deleted or lost here we could retrieve it from the remote site. The term I use is an "unforeseen disaster", a fire in the building, anthrax, a bomb threat, anything that would prevent us from accessing our facility here, the same rules apply; go home, connect through your home computer to the internet and everything works as normal."

### ***Return on Investment***

This continuity of business project wasn't about financial return as much as it was about sustaining the face of the firm to its clients. Explains Nations, "The financial protection it provides us is just a silver lining. Our people will be able to become productive again much quicker. You can buy an insurance policy against lost business but you can't buy insurance to regain your client's trust."

"I'm not an IT guy. I have been thrown into the IT world by necessity. I know how you evaluate an IT project, but this falls into the category of cataclysmic. You don't consider ROI. While I know what the cost of a lost business day is, the greater cost is the loss of trust that our clients would have in us."



### ***The Last Word***

"LAN Associates has been our partner for about four years. We put out a Request For Proposal about three years ago and they helped us design and totally modernize our complete IT infrastructure. They know it better than we do."

"Quite frankly when we considered this project we didn't consider anyone other than LAN Associates to advise us on this project. We asked them to provide us with various alternatives in the technology field. LAN Associates has done a yeoman's job of wading through the new technology and developing the best procedures. We know now that it works and I credit them for making it work. It's extremely complex in implementation although its fairly simple in concept. They have the horsepower and the resources here and in NY. They've teamed together all of their best and brightest to make it work. LAN Associates sought out the technology partners, the software that enables this replication and brought it to the table as a proposed solution, and its the solution that we chose."

***"They're very responsive, they get the job done, and there's value for the investment."***

**Jim Nations - Chief Operating Officer**