

# Case Study

architecture

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## Innovation & Design in Architecture

Ricoh Designs a More Stable, Sustainable Network for Architectural Firm—and Ultimately Delivers IT Peace of Mind

*“Ricoh has made data transfers fairly fast and seamless for us now, which goes a long way toward higher productivity and a good company culture. Resolving our network issues was critical for IDA to be able to grow.”*

– Dallas Barker  
Owner  
Innovation & Design in  
Architecture (IDA)  
Long Beach, California



### ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

Innovation & Design in Architecture (IDA), headquartered in Long Beach, California, understands the value of its data. The firm produces nationally recognized, award-winning architectural designs for some of the country’s most recognizable brands—Benihana™, Ruth’s Chris® Steakhouse and Marriott®, just to name a few. With a combined 50 years of experience and a stable of highly seasoned employees dedicated to branding, concept development, Building Information Modeling documentation and program management, IDA would be lost without its data.

### CHALLENGE

As IDA began to grow and relocate to a larger headquarters, the data the firm considered omnipresent suddenly became elusive. Computers and servers—well past their prime—needed to be updated. But that hadn’t happened with its outsourced IT provider.

During the move, much of IDA’s information housed on its aging network suddenly disappeared. The outsourced IT provider delivered the bad news. Most of the drives would need to be rebuilt and a new, more robust server and IT infrastructure was needed to support the firm going forward.

As an architectural firm, IDA routinely stores large CAD and QuickBooks® files that consumed significant space on its network. But its IT infrastructure wasn’t built to reliably handle these files. This became apparent when the firm moved to a new location and the network crashed.

### CHALLENGE

- Aging IT infrastructure
- Network crash during move
- Reduced workforce productivity
- Delayed server upgrade

### SOLUTION

- Ricoh Total IT Management solution
- Lost data retrieved during virus attack
- Night backup, faster network
- Files transferred from external hard drive

### RESULTS

- Higher productivity, positive culture
- Collaborative problem solving
- True IT partnership

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However, what could have been an all-out disaster turned into an alarming inconvenience. Turned out, IDA owner and CFO Dallas Barker had maintained a Drobo® external data storage solution outside the network with all the firm's active files. Its critical data was still accessible.

"We were lucky that we didn't lose everything during our network crash," said Barker. "Thanks to the external hard drive, we could continue to do business, but we certainly weren't functioning the way we should. Our productivity really took a hit."

IDA was able to plug its external hard drive system into laptops to access current client files. It was a clunky, sluggish interim solution as the firm awaited a new, more robust server from its IT provider.

They waited for the server for three months, suffering through chronic productivity and functionality lags. That delay—and the network crash during the move—crystalized things for IDA. The firm needed a new IT partner to take a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to updating and maintaining its network. They never wanted this to happen again.

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### SOLUTION

Ricoh emerged to deliver the network reliability and peace of mind that IDA needed. Through the Ricoh Total IT Management solution, they built a whole new IT infrastructure for IDA comprised of a new server, a backup solution and new Notebook computers for employees.

The Ricoh managed services solution also proactively monitors IDA's network devices to identify and resolve issues and maximize system availability. Virus, spam and spyware/malware software are installed, managed and updated. Helpdesk support is available 24/7/365 through the Customer Care Center in North America.

That's not to say there wasn't a snag or two along the way to a more reliable, operational network. Soon after IDA made the transition to Ricoh, IDA got hit with a random virus and employees couldn't get to their files—grinding productivity once again to a temporary halt. But Ricoh was quick to investigate—and confirmed that IDA's network had indeed suffered an attack.

"The virus had taken out all our corporate documents and archived files and was working its way to our actual files for our clients," said Barker. "That's when I unplugged and called Ricoh."

What really stood out to Barker was that Ricoh truly cared about the situation and saw the urgency in getting IDA back up and running. Ricoh was able to retrieve 99 percent of the lost files over the course of about a week. However, this situation revealed that IDA needed a more comprehensive backup in place in case something like this ever happened again. A backup solution was running on the main server, but not backing up files needed to perform IDA's day-to-day work for clients.

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Exercising an abundance of caution, a solution was implemented to back up several times a day. However, soon after, employees began reporting that the system was running far too slow. It would take 20 minutes to save a file at certain times of the day.

"I noticed at noon, everyone would just get up and go to lunch because the system was so slow," said Barker. "It was also extremely slow at 8 a.m., 2 p.m. and 4 p.m."

Eager to resolve the issue, Ricoh reset the daytime backup schedule done during peak work hours to nightly backup. In doing so, Ricoh shared concerns with Barker that doing so would leave data vulnerable if IDA experienced an issue such as a corrupt file during the day.

"We worked with Ricoh to come up with a plan to save network files to local files or make a copy of the central file so we wouldn't lose any active files," said Barker. "Now, we aren't backing up during the day, the network isn't so slow and my employees can be more productive."

"Ricoh successfully transferred all the data onto the server on the second try and we were able to phase out the Drobo. Now, our systems are running flawlessly."

Next, the Drobo external hard drive was examined and determined it, too, was slow and running out of storage capacity. They suggested proactively transferring all of the data on the Drobo to the new server to prevent a crash. IDA was all in. Employees saved their active files locally onto their computers and Ricoh worked through the weekend to move the files.

Trouble arose when it was discovered that file extensions exceeded the allotted number of characters the system could accommodate and certain files didn't save to the server. Not one to accept anything but total success, Ricoh enlisted software to increase the number of characters allowed in the file extension path.

"Ricoh successfully transferred all the data onto the server on the second try and we were able to phase out Drobo," said Barker. "Now, our systems are running flawlessly."

### RESULTS

The days of system crashes and delays getting necessary network upgrades are a distant memory for IDA. The firm now has a fully functioning, well-protected network—complete with backup and a fleet of PCs that enable its employees to work smarter and faster. Every once in a while there's a hiccup with the network or PCs, but with Ricoh as its partner, the firm has the utmost confidence that issues will be resolved competently and completely.

"Ricoh is very fast to act and nearly 100 percent of the time, they can fix whatever problem arises," said Barker.



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### **Productive Employees, Positive Culture**

Previous network snags had taken a toll on employee morale. Barker could see this in reduced employee productivity and the slumping culture overall. As he eyed growth, this was unacceptable. He wanted to add more than a dozen new employees to support the firm's expansion plans, but system crashes and a slow network wasn't the type of environment that would attract top talent.

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"We were willing to invest a little more to make sure our systems would be proactively monitored and our network would be sustainable going forward."

### **Collaborative Problem Solving, True Partnership**

Before partnering with Ricoh, Barker was the self-anointed IT guy at IDA. Along the way, he picked up enough knowledge to be able to troubleshoot some issues on his own. When he can't, Barker knows he can count on Ricoh to resolve problems fast—or walk him through how to fix things himself.

For example, IDA experienced a disconnect with several of its programs being able to communicate with each other. As a result, some programs became disabled while others continued to work. The first time this happened, someone was sent out and fixed the issue. Then, months down the road, it happened again and Ricoh was again quick to act.

"The second time it happened, Ricoh wrote out directions and did print screens to show me how to correct it if it happened again so I wouldn't have to call them," said Barker. "It did happen again and I was able to fix it without calling Ricoh."

### **Increased Investment, Peace of Mind**

Losing data—and potentially clients—has a high price for IDA. While upgrading its network and having a partner like Ricoh that truly cares about the firm's success costs a bit more monthly, it's an investment that delivers peace of mind for IDA.

"We were willing to invest a little more to make sure our systems would be proactively monitored and our network would be sustainable going forward," said Barker.